Philosophy and Law

Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors

Leo Strauss
Translated with an Introduction by
Eve Adler

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AND LAW

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Leo Strauss

TRANSLATED BY

EVE ADLER

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Translator's Introduction: The Argument of *Philosophy and Law*

Leo Strauss's *Philosophy and Law* (*Philosophie und Gesetz: Beiträge zum Verständnis Maimunis und Seiner Vorlaüfer,* Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1935) contains a groundbreaking study of the political philosophy of Maimonides and his Islamic predecessors, and offers an argument on behalf of that philosophy which is also a profound critique of modern philosophy. Almost sixty years from its first publication, it retains all of its startling freshness and its power to awaken direct thought about the great human questions it addresses. In this sense the book introduces itself and speaks for itself. The purpose of the present introduction is only to serve as a tentative map of the territory that the reader will discover for himself in the book.

I. Strauss's "Introduction"

Strauss's professed aim in *Philosophy and Law* is to "awaken a prejudice" in favor of the view that Maimonides's medieval rationalism is the true natural prototype of rationalism and, even more, to arouse a suspicion against the powerful opposing prejudice (p. 21). The powerful opposing prejudice, as it turns out, is not so much that modern rationalism is the true natural prototype of rationalism as that there is no true natural prototype of rationalism.

Strauss will take issue with the view that nature has been proved by modern thought to have been a delusion. His aim, then, is twofold: first, to arouse a suspicion against the view that it is irrational to inquire after the true natural prototype of a thing; and only in the second place to awaken a prejudice to the effect that as for rationalism, not modern rationalism but Maimonides's rationalism is its true natural prototype.

Strauss begins from the present situation of Judaism. This situation, like all phenomena peculiar to the present, has been determined by the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment has undermined the foundations of the Jewish tradition by appearing to have defeated orthodoxy once and for all. Strauss however, comparing the "so-called victory" of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy to a prematurely conceded battle, and remarking that victories are in any case very dubious evidences of the just cause, proceeds to reopen the quarrel between orthodoxy and the Enlightenment, with a view to reaching a well-founded judgment. Thus the core of the Introduction has the dramatic character of a trial. The re-hearing of this old case is motivated by the urgent suspicion that the untenable situation of Judaism may have resulted from an error in the original disposition of the case. Certainly there was an error in the original jurisdiction: world history, indeed just the history of the last two or three hundred years, was mistaken for a competent court (p. 28).

For what, after all, is the Enlightenment's case against orthodoxy? As a party whose interest lies both in solving the Jewish problem and in getting to the bottom of things, Strauss considers the arguments of both sides. It goes without saying that the Enlightenment did not *directly* refute the irrefutable premise of orthodoxy that God is omnipotent and His will unfathomable, or any of the claims of orthodoxy—the creation, miracles, the revelation—that depend on that premise. Nor does the Enlightenment have a case in its supposed *indirect* refutation of orthodoxy, its elaboration of a philosophic system to prove that the world

and life are perfectly intelligible without the assumption of a mysterious God; for its attempt to show that man is theoretically and practically the master of the world and of life has run into obstacles (p. 32). Nor can the new natural science legitimate the Enlightenment, since it always had latent in it the modern "idealism" which finally understands modern natural science as one historically conditioned form of world-construction among others, and by which therefore the natural world-view of the Bible is certified as equally eligible (p. 33). Nor can the Enlightenment rest its case on the modern ideal of freedom as the autonomy of man and his culture. This ideal only temporarily seemed viable at a moment when, "after the decisive entry into the state of civilization, one had forgotten the state of nature." But the state of nature was not to be disposed of merely by being forgotten. The ideal of freedom as the autonomy of man and his culture was only an unstable, absent-minded derivative of the original, the primary ideal of civilization as the self-assertion of man against overpowering nature (p. 35).

Here, then, is the true basis of the Enlightenment's case against orthodoxy: the ideal of civilization as the self-assertion of man against overpowering nature. Strauss characterizes this ideal as a species of Epicureanism, though to be sure profoundly transformed: the original Epicurean animus against the terror in the delusion of religion has become the Enlightenment animus against the delusion in the comfort of religion. Epicureanism so transformed, Enlightenment Epicureanism, is marked by a new virtue—intellectual probity—borrowed though from the morality of the Biblical tradition against which it was asserting itself: "This atheism with a good conscience, or even with a bad conscience, differs from the conscienceless atheism at which the past shuddered precisely by its conscientiousness, by its morality." The new Epicurean, instead of being willing to "live in hiding" safely, "learned to fight and die for honor and truth," and finally to reject the belief in God "for reasons of conscience." The true meaning of

the Enlightenment's primary ideal, its "last word and ultimate justification," is this atheism of intellectual probity (p. 37).

Having discovered in this atheism the fundamental premise of the Enlightenment, we see that, for the same reason for which it is "admittedly not demonstrable" (p. 138, n. 13 *in fine*), it is as irrefutable as the premise of orthodoxy. Since, then, the only alternative in the modern world is "orthodoxy or atheism," and since unconditionally political Zionism is the only "solution of the Jewish problem" possible on the basis of atheism, the present situation is untenable for the Jew who can be neither orthodox nor an unconditionally political Zionist. We are therefore compelled to ask whether enlightenment must be modern enlightenment, i.e., whether enlightenment must be atheism. And thus we are induced to apply for aid to the medieval enlightenment—that of Maimonides—where Strauss undertakes to recover the leading idea whose loss accounts for "many modern certainties and doubts," the idea of law (p. 39).

That "the idea of law" was the crucial piece of missing evidence in the original misjudgment of Enlightenment v. Orthodoxy appears to come as a surprise in the last sentence of the Introduction, but it has not been wholly without preparation. If the opening movement of *Philosophy and Law* is suggestive of a case at law, its deepest theme is nature, its ruling image is the cave, and its method is history of philosophy. In two extremely condensed essays that appear as footnotes to the Introduction (pp. 135–136 n. 2, 137–138 n. 13), Strauss announces the theme, introduces the image, and justifies the method. He expressly informs us, first of all, that the "assertion made in the text" about the Enlightenment's attack on the Biblical tradition "extends also to the philosophic tradition," that is, that the case of Enlightenment v. Orthodoxy is equally the case of Enlightenment v. Philosophy. The Enlightenment's intention in attacking the Biblical (or the philosophic) tradition was to rehabilitate the natural through the denial of the

supernatural. But, against its own intention, it only succeeded in overthrowing (or forgetting) the natural foundation it had sought to secure. The leading idea of the medieval enlightenment, the idea of law, was lost together with the idea of philosophy and for the same reason. Since both took their bearings by nature—philosophy as quest for knowledge of nature and law as necessitated by human nature—both disappeared with the oblivion of nature. In order to rediscover the idea of law, therefore, it will be necessary to rediscover nature first; and along this path, law must lead also to philosophy. The primary rediscovery of nature can be achieved only through "a radical critique of the principles of the tradition," Greek and Biblical, which in turn can take place only through history of philosophy. Strauss expresses this in a remarkable image: "To that end and only to that end is the 'historicizing' of philosophy justified and necessary: only the history of philosophy makes possible the ascent from the second, 'unnatural' cave, into which we have fallen less because of the tradition itself than because of the tradition of polemics against the tradition, into that first, 'natural' cave which Plato's image depicts, to emerge from which into the light is the original meaning of philosophizing" (p. 136).

In order to serve this end, though, the history of philosophy would have to be guided by a mindful distinction between the old love of truth and the new probity: "for if one makes atheism, which is admittedly not demonstrable, into a positive, dogmatic premise, then the probity that is expressed by it is certainly somewhat different from love of truth" (p. 138). With this we are in a position to understand that the title of *Philosophy and Law* is as much as to say that philosophy and law are in the same boat, the apparently capsized boat of nature. In this light we begin to appreciate the primary aim of *Philosophy and Law,* the awakening of a suspicion against the powerful prejudice that there is no true natural prototype of rationalism. Strauss's project in *Philosophy and Law* is to excavate a tunnel from the impermeably sealed second cave back to that first cave

where the faint penetration of the light of nature could still motivate the beginning of philosophizing.

II. Chapter 1
The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns in the Philosophy of Judaism: Notes on Julius Guttmann, *The Philosophy of Judaism*

If the drama of the Introduction lies in its representation of a trial, that of Chapter 1 lies in the spectacle of Strauss playing at cat-and-mouse with Julius Guttmann, the learned author of a history of Jewish philosophy. With many expressions of respectful bewilderment and many patient unravelings of the bewildering assertions, Strauss demonstrates from Guttmann's book the untenable position of the modern Jew. In exploding Guttmann's thesis he uncovers the conclusion that enlightenment need not be modern enlightenment, that the alternative "orthodoxy vs. enlightenment" need not collapse into the alternative "orthodoxy vs. atheism."

The heart of Guttmann's thesis, as Strauss shows, is that modern Jewish philosophy is superior to medieval Jewish philosophy in this point: whereas medieval Jewish philosophy was able to retain the belief in the revealed *form* of the Bible, as being in harmony with medieval (teleological) metaphysics, only modern Jewish philosophy is able to retain the *content* of Judaism, the "personalistic piety of the Bible," as being in harmony with modern (mechanistic) metaphysics (p. 44). Guttmann, then, holds that modern Jewish philosophy is superior to medieval as content is superior to form. But Strauss's analysis of Guttmann's thesis eventually discloses that revelation, so far from being only the *form* of the religious ideas of the Bible, is itself one of the religious ideas of the Bible; indeed it is "*the* central religious idea of the Bible and the condition of the possibility of all the others" (p. 52). Hence Strauss is willing to entertain Guttmann's claim that *the* original achievement of medieval philosophy was "philosophy of religion," in the

sense that philosophy was driven to justify its recognition of the revelation as a presupposition of philosophizing, and thus "to make religion a problem for philosophy" (p. 55).

But Strauss is brought up short by a "shockingly unintelligible thing" (p. 64) in Guttmann's account of medieval "philosophy of religion." According to Guttmann, what makes the medieval philosophers who believe in the revelation "rationalists" is that they hold that reason is capable, of itself, of knowing the whole of revelation. So for them the purpose of the revelation is purely "pedagogical": it presents to the multitude the same truths that the philosophers ascertain for themselves through reason. The philosophers therefore are not dependent on the revelation for any theoretical or practical truth; and, because even the multitude's dependence on the revelation is in fact supplied only by the philosophers' interpretation of the revelation, no one, ultimately, is dependent on the revelation. Strauss explains his shock: "whoever 'believes' in the revelation in this manner actually keeps, as Lessing puts it, only the names, and repudiates the things." "Keeping the things" here would require that philosophy *need* the revelation, and have therefore a passionate *interest* in the revelation. How could philosophy of religion be *the* original achievement of medieval philosophy if what it shows is that the revelation, however "real," is altogether superfluous? (p. 64).

Strauss is reluctantly compelled by the shocking unintelligibility of Guttmann's argument to venture two suggestions. First, the claim that the medieval rationalists believe reason is capable of knowing the whole of revelation is "not in accord with the facts" (p. 68)—at least the exemplary medieval rationalist Maimonides holds that the revelation contains *more* than reason of itself can know. In particular, reason cannot answer the crucial *theoretical* question whether the world is eternal or created; for this the philosopher is wholly dependent on the revelation (pp. 66–67). Second, in considering the problem presented to philosophy by the revelation, Guttmann was guided by the modern division of philosophy, where this problem falls under *phi-*

losophy of religion, rather than by the ancient division, where it falls under *politics*. Thus he missed the leading idea of medieval philosophy, the idea of law (p. 73). For Guttmann did not notice that the ancient and modern divisions of philosophy are not mere formalities but are marked by distinctive contents. The content of *philosophy of religion* is that the moral ordinances are grounded in the subjective moral consciousness, while the actual particulars that make law law are groundless. But the content of *politics* is that man is by nature a political animal who therefore (cf. pp. 70–71) needs a law, and therefore a lawgiver. And when the problem of the revelation is considered under the heading of politics, it emerges that the philosopher is dependent on the revelation not only for the crucial theoretical question, but also and especially for the crucial *practical* question. For according to the claim of politics, the philosopher as a human being needs to live under a law that makes the existence of a human community possible. Even more, as a philosopher he is concerned with living under a rational law, one that aims at the specific perfection of the human soul. But neither as human being nor as philosopher is he qualified to give this law as law, i.e., with all the concrete particulars that make it law. Therefore the philosopher, like the multitude but even more so, is dependent on the revelation (p. 71).

Strauss is thus compelled to concede to Guttmann that the medievals are indeed "more primitive" than the moderns: they are guided "not by the derived idea of natural right, but by the primary, the ancient, idea of law: they are pupils of Plato, not of Christians" (p. 73). With this, Strauss has intimated the thesis to which Chapters 2 and 3 will be devoted—that the medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophers are Platonists. For against Guttmann's claim that "philosophy of religion" is the original achievement of medieval philosophy, we are now in a position to see that the doctrine of medieval "philosophy of religion," or better to say medieval politics, is derived from Plato: the revelation is the law by which the prophet becomes "the founder of the

Platonic state." Indeed the only—but decisive—innovation of the medievals is to replace the possibility of a future philosopher-king with the actuality of a past prophet. Thus even their innovation detracts from their originality. For since in their view the perfect law is already given, they therefore lack the urgency in seeking it that characterizes Plato's political philosophy: "their philosophy of law does not have the sharpness, originality, depth, and—ambiguity of Platonic politics" (p. 75).

In order to consider the meaning of medieval Platonism, Strauss begins by identifying the "highest point of view shared by Plato and the medievals" as the idea of a *divine law.* In this light, medieval Platonism must be understood as beginning not from the *Republic* but from the *Laws*. For it is in the *Laws* that Plato, "in accordance with a kind of interpretation which anticipates the philosophic interpretation of the revealed law among the medieval thinkers, transforms the 'divine laws' of Greek antiquity into truly divine laws." For the medieval thinkers, Plato's project could be the starting point of a philosophic understanding of the revelation only if Platonic philosophy had suffered from an *aporia* in principle, through which Plato had been able to point to—but only to point to—the revelation as its remedy (p. 76).

Thus Strauss concludes Chapter 1 by being thrust "as if by chance" on "the necessary connection between politics and theology (metaphysics)" (p. 78). For Plato the need for a law to provide for human beings stems from the absence of divine provision, and accordingly the realization of the ideal state depends on chance. Maimonides's successor Gersonides maintains against Plato that the world ruled by divine providence is already the ideal state: as a consequence of his "radicalizing" of the idea of divine providence, human provision for the stability of the human associations becomes entirely dispensable. Gersonides thereby approaches "that modern kind of politics which believes, on the basis of a belief in providence that ignores the power of evil, that it can confine the operation of the state within the

narrowest bounds" (p. 78). The Platonic politics of Maimonides stands between the extremes marked out by Plato and Gersonides: against Plato, Maimonides holds that there is divine providence, but in such a way that, against Gersonides, the human need for law is necessarily fulfilled by a human prophet. The study of the medievals that begins, like Guttmann's, from medieval metaphysics misses the political problem, which conceals nothing less than the leading idea of medieval philosophy: the philosophic explanation of the law as the presupposition of philosophizing. But the study of the medievals that begins from Platonic politics "brings to light also the metaphysical problems, and that in such a way as to offer the only guarantee of understanding their proper, that is their human, meaning" (p. 78).

III. Chapter 2
The Legal Foundation of Philosophy: The Commandment to Philosophize and the Freedom of Philosophizing

Since the actuality of the revelation is the controlling prephilosophic assumption of the medieval rationalists, it requires them to ask at the outset whether philosophy is forbidden, permitted, or commanded by the law. Only after the finding that it is permitted or commanded, in any case authorized, does the question arise whether philosophy is free without limit, or whether the law imposes a limit on the freedom of philosophizing. Strauss considers the treatment of this question in Averroes, Maimonides, and Gersonides. He formulates the view of Averroes and Maimonides explicitly (pp. 88, 92), and that of Gersonides implicitly (p. 100), in the saying, "the freedom of philosophy depends upon its bondage." With this saying Strauss raises the question: how does philosophy's bondage to the truth proclaimed by the *law* differ from "the bondage which is given with the very intention of philosophy itself, the bondage to known truth"? (p. 87–88).

Averroes presents a thematic treatment of the freedom of philosophy in the *Decisive Treatise,* where he argues that philosophy, defined as the consideration of the existing things in relation to their Maker, is expressly enjoined by the law upon those suited for it. Philosophy and the law cannot be in conflict since both are truth. Therefore if philosophy leads to any apparent difference from the law, the philosophers are enjoined by the law to interpret the law. The freedom of philosophizing, then, amounts to the freedom of interpreting the law. Strauss proceeds to Averroes's discussion of five alleged limits on interpretation, and shows how each, after examination, turns out not to limit the freedom of philosophizing. To this point, philosophy is free. But its freedom is thrown into doubt by Averroes's distinction between two kinds of *error* in regard to the law. There is a kind of error that is excusable in those qualified to philosophize; but there is a second kind, "disavowal" of the principles of the law or "innovation" in the derived teachings, that is inexcusable simply. Strauss here calls attention to the distinction between philosophy's own characterization of deviation from the "principles of the law" which are accessible to reason as "error," and the law's characterization of such deviation as "disavowal (unbelief)." The latter means that the acknowledgment or denial of rational truths has the "character and consequences" of the acknowledgment or denial of dogma, and thus that the freedom of philosophy is limited by an extra-philosophic, prephilosophic authority (pp. 88–89).

This is the closest Strauss comes in *Philosophy and Law* to a thematic discussion of the law as penal law. For the law there are truths the "consequence" of whose disavowal is punishment, and preeminently, as indicated already in Averroes's definition of philosophy, the truth of God's existence, by which the law stands or falls. "Philosophy is not sovereign. . . . the law has the first place." Strauss leaves it open in what sense the first place is first, but makes a suggestion: "It is not that one occupies from the outset a standpoint outside the law, from which one

proceeds on the path of rational reflection to submission to the law;" rather, one occupies from the outset a standpoint within the cave: "the law has the first place" (p. 88). Indeed one occupies even at the end a standpoint depending on the cave. For as the philosophers are human beings who are by nature in need of living under a law, the condition of the possibility of philosophy is the existence of the political community, which in turn is made possible by the law: "philosophy is not sovereign." The human prophet's provision for the human need of (punitive) law amounts to a defense of humanity against the (punitive) law of nature. When the law punishes disavowal of the truths by which the law stands or falls, it anticipates (i.e., prevents) nature's punishment of such disavowal. By singling out the disavower for exemplary punishment, the law deters the career of such erring opinions as, if widely held, would undo the authority of the law itself, and with it the necessary conditions of human life and therefore of thought. Thus "the freedom of philosophy depends upon its bondage."

But what are the truths by which the law stands or falls? According to Maimonides, philosophy as authorized by the law is free "in its sphere," which is nature, but bound by the law in the supernatural sphere, which human intellect is insufficient to know. In particular, while Averroes had held that the law's teaching on creation is open to interpretation, Maimonides holds that philosophy is bound by this teaching. "For Maimonides it is known that Scripture teaches the creation of the world and—what is even more important for him—that Judaism forfeits its foundations if the assertion of creation is abandoned" (p. 91). The preservation of the foundations of Judaism is more important for Maimonides than the fact that Scripture teaches the creation; it is in fact "the most important reason which causes Maimonides to assert the insufficiency of the human intellect and its dependence on revelation." Averroes's teaching that human intellect is sufficient to master the question of creation depends on his teaching that the question of creation is irrelevant to dogma, i.e., that it is not a principle on

which the law stands or falls. Thus, Maimonides's disagreement with Averroes on the question of the sufficiency of the human intellect is secondary to his full agreement with Averroes on the *primacy of the law.* By denying the sufficiency of the human intellect to answer the question of creation on which the law stands or falls, Maimonides reaches the same conclusion Averroes had reached by denying that the law stands or falls on this question. "The freedom of philosophy depends upon its bondage."

For Gersonides, as one might have inferred from his "radicalized" idea of divine providence (p. 78), no need of human provision for the preservation of the community could limit the freedom of philosophy. Strauss presents Gersonides's position as harmonizing the teachings of Maimonides and Averroes on the question of the sufficiency of human intellect. Gersonides holds that while human intellect is sufficient in principle to the mastery of any particular knowledge, including creation, its finitude makes it insufficient in practice to the mastery of all knowledge. Thus even he accepts a limitation on the freedom of philosophy that is actually "much more radical" than those accepted by Averroes and Maimonides. He holds that the law, "like the world, is a work of infinite wisdom and grace and thus is knowable to the finite intellect only to a small extent; the Torah itself is a *world, in* which man lives." The law—"like the world, *as* a 'world' "—is prior to philosophy: the law has the first place for Gersonides just as for Maimonides and Averroes (p. 100). "The freedom of philosophy depends upon its bondage."

IV. Chapter 3
The Philosophic Foundation of the Law: Maimonides' Doctrine of Prophecy and its Sources

Strauss seeks first to elucidate Maimonides's prophetology by showing that the position in aid of which the *Guide* was written is possible only if there is prophecy in a certain sense. Then he applies Maimonides' prophetology to

the development of a deeper understanding of Maimonides' position. That position is the "religious enlightenment of the Middle Ages," to which he has directed our interest as an alternative to modern enlightenment. Medieval and modern enlightenment share their concern with the freedom of human thought, the "freedom of philosophizing," but differ conspicuously in that medieval enlightenment is esoteric, while modern enlightenment is exoteric. The difference derives from the fact that medieval enlightenment asserts the primacy of the *theoretical* life, while the modern Enlightenment asserts the primacy of *practical* reason (p. 103).

Maimonides's position, "medieval enlightenment," is constituted by the Greek ideal of the life of theory on the one hand and the binding character of the revealed law on the other. The link between the two elements is that the highest object of the revealed law is to summon man to the theoretical life. Under commandment of the revealed law, philosophy takes for its subject matter all of being, including revelation as the law given by God through a prophet. Since the sphere of philosophy is nature, prophecy is intelligible to philosophy insofar as it is natural. Therefore prophetology, the philosophic foundation of the law, is the explanation of prophecy from the nature of man (p. 104).

In the light of this preliminary account of Maimonides's position, Strauss proceeds to interpret Maimonides's prophetology, relying both on the *Guide* itself and on its sources in Alfarabi and Avicenna. His interpretation has the form of an inquiry into the inner coherence of the six apparently unconnected faculties that Maimonides enumerates as requisite to prophecy: perfect intellect; perfect imagination; perfect morals; courage; divination; and leadership. The inquiry leads through an instructive study of the Falasifa's psychology, and particularly the status of the imaginative faculty, to the conclusion that prophecy is *both* a combination of theoretical and practical perfection *and* an enhancement of each of these perfections over the standard attainable by non-prophets. The prophet is both phi-

losopher and statesman, "teacher and leader in one" (p. 120), but in such a way that both his philosophizing and his statesmanship are superior to those of men who are only philosophers or only statesmen.

Having laid a groundwork in the elements of Maimonides' prophetology, Strauss proceeds to its entire system with the question, "What is the final end of prophecy?" (p. 120). The end of prophecy is the end of Platonic politics: the prophet is the founder of a community which is directed to the proper perfection of man; he is "the founder of the Platonic state" (p. 125). The prophet, however, rather than ruling as king, is the proclaimer of a divine law. Since Maimonides presents his prophetology as the fulfillment of Platonic politics, our understanding of it depends on the relationship between the prophet and the philosopher-king (pp. 127–128).

According to Maimonides, law has two kinds: human, which is directed only to the preservation of the bodies; and divine, which is directed also and especially to the specific perfection and thus the happiness of man. According to Avicenna, politics has two divisions, kingship and prophecy, of which kingship is the subject of Plato's and Aristotle's books "on the state," and prophecy the subject of their books "on the laws." Strauss shows that Avicenna's distinction between kingship and prophecy corresponds precisely to Maimonides' distinction between human law and divine law (pp. 123–124). He thereby suggests that according to the Falasifa the relationship between the philosopher-king of Plato and the prophet of the Falasifa is already intimated by Plato himself in the relationship between the *Republic* and the *Laws*. But in this view the politics of the *Laws* is not a descent from but the consummation or perfection of the politics of the *Republic*.

Maimonides and the Falasifa follow Plato not only in their understanding of politics but also in their understanding of philosophizing, which they express by appropriating Plato's simile of the cave. Yet in appropriating Plato's cave simile they also express a criticism of Plato's philosopher-

king. According to them, Plato is mistaken in holding that the philosopher is the highest human type. It is the prophets, not the philosophers, who "see as it were the light itself" (p. 127). The philosophers' knowledge is necessarily indirect and incomplete; they are thereby dependent upon the prophets, for whom the night in which the human race is stumbling about is illuminated by lightning flashes from on high, by *direct knowledge* of the upper world. Maimonides and the Falasifa derive Platonic politics from the un-Platonic premise of the revelation (p. 128), according to which divine providence makes wisdom directly accessible to human beings through prophecy.

Strauss concludes the chapter and the book with the suggestion that this un-Platonic premise is after all not so un-Platonic: precisely in this premise of the revelation, Maimonides and the Falasifa still remain Platonists. He unfolds his suggestion from Hermann Cohen's "paradoxical" claim that "Maimonides was in deeper harmony with Plato than with Aristotle." If the opposition between Plato and Aristotle amounted to that between the primacy of quest for the right life, for the good, and the primacy of pure theory, then Maimonides, with his "enthusiasm for pure theory, for scientific knowledge for its own sake," would have to be classed "unconditionally" as an Aristotelian (p. 130). But, for the reason indicated by Cohen's own saying, "All honor to the God of Aristotle, but he is not the God of Israel," a Jew as Jew *cannot* be an Aristotelian in the sense at issue. He must, if he asserts the primacy of theory, *limit* this primacy in some way and thus call it into question. For Maimonides, who does assert the primacy of theory, the necessary limitation lies in the inferiority of the philosopher to the prophet: the philosopher needs the prophet both for his direct theoretical knowledge and for his proclamation of the law. In this reservation against the primacy of theory, which appears in his prophetology, Maimonides is then a Platonist. But what of the rest of his philosophy, where he appears to follow Aristotle rather than Plato?

Plato teaches no less decisively than Aristotle that man's specific perfection lies in pure contemplation. The distinction between Plato and Aristotle lies in the stand they take towards theory *as* man's highest perfection. While Aristotle "leaves it in its natural freedom," Plato "does not permit the philosophers 'what is now permitted them' "; he "'*compels*' them to care for the others" (p. 132). The distinctiveness of Plato lies in his calling for and inquiring into a law, the "divine law," under which philosophy could stand as authorized and set free *by* law. Plato's aporetic quest for the divine law that could authorize philosophy's freedom gives his political philosophy its "sharpness, originality, depth, and—ambiguity" (p. 75). The political philosophy of Maimonides and the Falasifa loses Plato's sharpness, originality, and depth by resolving its ambiguity. Because the divinely revealed law that Plato could only desire is actual for them, they are therefore, as authorized by that law, "free to aristotelize." "Since, for Maimonides and the Falasifa, the law is *given,* it is not the leading and first theme of their philosophizing. Hence the metaphysical themes occupy so much more space in their writings than the moral-political. But indeed they had to attempt, as philosophers, to *understand* the given law; this understanding was made possible for them by Plato, and only by Plato" (p. 133).

Strauss's professed aim in *Philosophy and Law,* we recall, was to awaken a prejudice in favor of the view that Maimonides's rationalism is the true natural prototype of rationalism, and, even more, to arouse a suspicion against the powerful opposing prejudice (p. 21). Along the path of arousing this suspicion Strauss has brought forward for scrutiny the "paradoxical incongruity between life and thought" implied by Guttmann's argument for the superiority of modern over medieval philosophy (p. 46). That a paradoxical view may be true can be inferred from the conclusion of *Philosophy and Law,* where Strauss defends Cohen's "paradoxical" claim about Maimonides' Platonism (p. 130). That a paradoxical incongruity between life and

thought is not an insight of modern as opposed to medieval rationalism emerges directly from Strauss's presentation of Maimonides's rationalism. For according to Maimonides the revelation presents rational and supra-rational teachings which, while not strictly true, are necessary for life, while philosophy presents rational teachings which, while true, are not strictly necessary for life (pp. 66–67 with p. 140 n. 18). Strauss's criticism of modern rationalism is not that it asserts such an incongruity between life and thought as would be shown by medieval rationalism to be illusory, but that it cannot account for this incongruity so adequately, so naturally, as medieval rationalism does. This is because the leading idea of medieval rationalism, the idea of law, entails the idea of nature. Only by recovering a standpoint within "that first, natural cave which Plato's image depicts" could we hope to emerge into the light, in accordance with "the original meaning of philosophizing."

Note on this Translation

The present translation was first undertaken in 1980 as an aid to my own study of this book. Accuracy in rendering the text was its only goal then and remains its preeminent goal now. The usefulness of the only previous English translation (Leo Strauss, *Philosophy and Law: Essays Toward the Understanding of Maimonides and his Predecessors,* trans. Fred Baumann, Jewish Publication Society, 1987) was diminished by many misleading errors which obscured the genuine difficulties of Strauss's argument. I offer the present translation in the hope that it may make those genuine difficulties more directly accessible to a wider audience.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge here my indebtedness to Middlebury College both for the academic leaves in 1982–83 and 1988–89 that enabled me to pursue the Arabic studies which proved necessary to my work on this translation, and for generous financial support in preparing the manuscript for publication. To Kenneth Green I am grateful for

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EVE ADLER

Introduction

In a phrase of Hermann Cohen, Maimonides is the "classic of rationalism" in Judaism. This phrase appears to us to be correct in a stricter sense than Cohen may have intended: Maimonides' rationalism is the true natural model, the standard to be carefully protected from any distortion, and thus the stumbling-block on which modern rationalism falls. To awaken a prejudice in favor of this view of Maimonides and, even more, to arouse suspicion against the powerful opposing prejudice, is the aim of the present work.

Even if one is free of all natural inclination towards the past, even if one believes that the present, as the age in which man has attained the highest rung yet of his self-consciousness, can really learn nothing from the past, one still encounters Maimonides's teaching as soon as one seriously attempts to make up one's mind about the present so assessed. For such an attempt can succeed only if one continually confronts modern rationalism, as the source of the present, with medieval rationalism. But if one undertakes a confrontation of this kind seriously, and thus in the freedom of the question which of the two opposed rationalisms is the true rationalism, then medieval rationalism, whose "classic" for us is Maimonides, changes in the course of the investigation from a mere means of discerning more sharply the specific character of modern rationalism into the

standard measured against which the latter proves to be only a semblance of rationalism. And thus the self-evident starting-point, that self-knowledge is a necessary and meaningful undertaking for the present, acquires an unself-evident justification: the critique of the present, the critique of modern rationalism[1] as the critique of modern sophistry, is the necessary beginning, the constant companion, and the unerring sign of that search for truth which is possible in our time.

The present situation of Judaism—leaving aside, therefore, the fundamental constitution of Judaism, which is not affected in or by this situation—is determined by the Enlightenment. For all phenomena peculiar to the present—if one does not let oneself be deceived by their foregrounds and pretenses—refer back to the Enlightenment, that is, to the movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries initiated by Descartes' *Meditations* and Hobbes' *Leviathan,* as their source. This fact is hard to contest; only its bearing and significance are, certainly, contestable. The premises about which the present is at one with the Age of Enlightenment have now become so self-evident that it is only or chiefly the opposition between the Enlightenment and the present that tends to be remarked and taken seriously: the Enlightenment appears long since to have been "overcome"; its legitimate concerns, which have now become "trivial," appear to have been taken into account; its "shallowness," on the other hand, appears to have fallen into deserved contempt. How remote from our age is the quarrel about the verbal inspiration vs. the merely human origin of Scripture; about the reality vs. the impossibility of the Biblical miracles; about the eternity and thus the immutability vs. the historical variability of the Law; about the creation of the world vs. the eternity of the world: all discussions are now conducted on a level on which the great controversial questions debated by the Enlightenment and orthodoxy no longer even need to be posed, and must ultimately even be rejected as "falsely posed." If the matter could be left at that, the influence of the Enlightenment on Judaism would

be in fact as unworthy of serious reflection and care as it is taken to be not, indeed, by all contemporary men, but certainly by all contemporary "movements." But are the premises of the Enlightenment really trivial? Is the Enlightenment really a contemptible adversary?

If, however, the foundation of the Jewish tradition is belief in the creation of the world, in the reality of the Biblical miracles, in the absolutely binding character and essential immutability of the Law, resting on the revelation at Sinai, then one must say that the Enlightenment has undermined the foundation of the Jewish tradition. Indeed from the very beginning it was with complete consciousness and complete purposefulness that the radical Enlightenment—think of Spinoza—did this. And as far as the moderate Enlightenment is concerned, it had to pay for its attempt to mediate between orthodoxy and radical enlightenment, between belief in revelation and belief in the self-sufficiency of reason, with the contempt from which it cannot now be rescued even by the greatest fairness of historical judgment. Later thinkers, who saw that the attack of Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, Voltaire, Reimarus could not be warded off with the defenses of a Moses Mendelssohn, began by giving their support to the radical Enlightenment as opposed to orthodoxy; thus they began by accepting all real or supposed conclusions and all explicit or implicit premises of the critique of miracles and the critique of the Bible; but in their own view they then re-established the foundation of the tradition through the counter-attack they raised against the (radical) Enlightenment. In other words, the later thinkers, who recognized that any compromise between orthodoxy and the Enlightenment is untenable, accomplished the move from the level on which the Enlightenment and orthodoxy had done battle, and on which the moderate Enlightenment had striven for a compromise, to another, a "higher" level, which as such made possible a synthesis of Enlightenment and orthodoxy. Thus it was on this newly won level that the later thinkers re-established the foundation of the tradition—of course, as cannot be

otherwise in a synthesis, in a modified, "internalized" form. But it is not at all difficult to see that the "internalizing" of concepts like creation, miracles, and revelation robs these concepts of their whole meaning. The "internalizing" of these concepts differs from the disavowal of their meaning only in the well-intentioned, if not good, purpose of its authors. If God did not create the world in the "external" sense, if He did not really create it, if the creation therefore cannot be affirmed theoretically—as simply true, as the fact of creation—then one must in all probity disavow the creation, or, at the very least, avoid any talk of creation. But all "internalizations" of the basic tenets of the tradition rest at bottom on this: from the "reflexive" premise, from the "higher" level of the post-Enlightenment synthesis, the relation of God to nature is no longer intelligible and thus is no longer even interesting.

That the "internalizations" which are so common today are in truth disavowals—this fact, manifest to the impartial view, is obscured only by the circumstance that at the outset—that is, so long as we do not purposely struggle against our own prejudices through historical reflection—we find ourselves fully in the power of the mode of thought produced by the Enlightenment and consolidated by its proponents or opponents. This partiality comes to light especially in the way in which the "internalization" of the basic tenets of the Jewish tradition has been justified. There is no "internalization" of this kind for whose innocence one cannot discover and bring forward as witness some statement or other of some traditional authority or other. But—even ignoring completely the unprincipled way in which statements torn from their context are often brought forward as conclusive testimony—such really after-the-fact defenses depend upon one of the two following errors, or upon both at once. First, one appeals against the orthodox, "external" view to such witnesses as belong to an undeveloped stage of the formulation of belief. In this way one can protect oneself, for example, against the doctrines of verbal inspiration, the creation as creation *ex nihilo,* and

the immortality of the individual. But whenever these doctrines first emerged historically, they stand in a connection of such manifest necessity with the doctrines about whose Biblical origin there is no quarrel that one can hardly doubt them if one intends to remain in harmony with the "religion of the prophets." By appealing against the completed expression of the Jewish tradition to those very elements that stand in the foreground in the Bible, and especially in the latter prophets, one is following the method of the Enlightenment, which has been acknowledged especially by "religious liberalism" as authoritative. This fact is generally recognized, and insofar as liberalism has latterly fallen into disrepute, partly on very good and partly on very bad grounds, the biblicist or historical-critical method of "overcoming" orthodoxy is less and less in use. Second, one appeals against orthodoxy to extreme statements that have been ventured within the Jewish tradition. In this way one can protect oneself, for example, against the doctrine of the absolute immutability of the law and the doctrine of miracles. But—however well attested and however often repeated an extreme statement may be—it is one thing to have a very "bold," very "free" statement which, being meant as a daring venture, has a solid basis in the beliefs in creation, miracles, and revelation that permit it in the first place, and which therefore, according to its own meaning, is erroneous and even preposterous when separated from this basis; it is quite another thing to use a statement grounded in this way as a foundation. Now, insofar as one makes an extreme statement—like the peak of a pyramid—into the foundation of the Jewish tradition, one again shows that one is altogether partial to the Enlightenment's mode of thought. For precisely this is characteristic of the Enlightenment: that, in its supposedly or only ostensibly "immanent" criticism and development of the tradition, it makes extremes of the tradition into the foundation of a position that is actually completely incompatible with the tradition.[2]

If therefore it must be insisted that the "internalizing"

of the basic tenets of the tradition robs these tenets of their meaning; if therefore it turns out that not only every compromise between orthodoxy and Enlightenment, but also every synthesis of these opposed positions, is finally untenable; if therefore the alternative "orthodoxy or Enlightenment" may today no longer, or rather, may today not yet be evaded; then one must first of all, and at the very least, climb back down onto the level of the classical quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy, as onto a level on which battle was done and could be done about the one, eternal truth, since the natural desire for truth had not yet been stifled by the newer dogma that "religion" and "science" each has in view the "truth" belonging to it. In order to reach this level, one need not even withdraw very far from the magic circle of the present: the radical Enlightenment still lives today, and it is in a certain way, viz. as regards its last and furthest consequences, far more radical today than in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and orthodoxy too still lives today. The quarrel between orthodoxy and the Enlightenment that is thus possible without further ado must be resumed—or rather, as one recognizes if one does not intentionally shut one's eyes, the quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy, already longstanding and still ever-continuing, must be understood anew.

But has not the demand for a resumption or a reunderstanding of this quarrel long since been tacitly fulfilled? Why then stir up yet again what at long, long last has become calm? Is not the critique of the "internalizations," to which that demand is chiefly due, a forcing of an open door? Did not the movement whose goal is to return to the tradition, the movement whose exemplary and unforgotten expression was the development, if not the teaching, of Hermann Cohen—did not that movement have as its actual, though often hidden, impulse precisely the insight into the questionableness of the "internalizations" with which the nineteenth century generally contented itself? Has not the situation of Judaism, thanks to that movement,

changed from the ground up in the course of the last generation?—That the situation of Judaism has changed as a result of the return movement must be admitted; that it has changed from the ground up must be contested. It has not changed from the ground up[3] precisely because, in the entire course of the return movement, there has not ensued a fundamental reflection on the quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy, a fundamental review of the results of this quarrel. And yet nothing would have been more urgent, within the meaning of that very movement, than such reflection and review. It was not without reservation that the return to the tradition was carried out by precisely the most important advocates of this movement. To the end, Cohen raised explicit reservations against the tradition in the name of freedom, of man's autonomy. And Franz Rosenzweig, who, in a sense at least, went even further on the road of Cohen than Cohen himself, left no doubt that he could adopt neither the traditional belief in immortality nor the view of the Law allegedly peculiar to contemporary German orthodoxy. These or related reservations,[4] —which, as one immediately recognizes on a closer view, and as Cohen and Rosenzweig did not hesitate to admit, are of Enlightenment origin—would require, precisely because the return to the tradition claims to stand in relationship with a "new thinking," a coherent and fundamental justification from the new basis. And one dare not assert that they have received such a justification—which would be, in the nature of the case, also a partial justification of the Enlightenment—in such a way as to satisfy reasonable demands. Rather, the return to the tradition was carried out in discussion only with the post-Enlightenment synthesis, especially with Hegel.[5] It was believed that one could dismiss any direct and thematic discussion with the Enlightenment, since it was assumed—logically, in the sense of the "overcome" [überwunden] Hegelianism—that with the "overcoming" of Hegelianism one had simultaneously "overcome" the Enlightenment which Hegelianism had "transcended" [aufgehoben]. In truth, however, the critique of

Hegelianism had actually led, in the nature of the case, to a rehabilitation of the Enlightenment. For what, if not a rehabilitation of the Enlightenment, was the critique of the "internalizations" carried out in the nineteenth century, especially among the successors of Lessing—the critique on which the return to the tradition depended? If the tenets of the tradition have also and especially an "external" sense, then the attack of the Enlightenment, which had aimed only at the "externally" understood tenets of the tradition —against their "inner" sense Hobbes, Spinoza, Voltaire wrote and would have written not a single line—was not based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the tradition. This fact should have been admitted and emphasized, and, since part of the Enlightenment's critique of the tradition was being accepted in a way that was not fundamentally clear, it should also have been admitted and emphasized that the quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy was not only not meaningless but had not even been dealt with. But all those who have attentively observed the movement under discussion can testify that neither the one fact nor the other has been admitted and emphasized.[6] Thus, precisely in case the motive of this movement is justified, it is most important that the classic quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy be resumed and re-understood.

For this quarrel has by no means been made groundless by the so-called "victory" of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy. One would have to be of the opinion that world history, that just the history of two or three hundred years, is the final judgment; whereas in truth, as the Enlightenment itself still knew, victories are "very ambiguous evidences of the just cause, or rather . . . none at all," and thus "he who wins and he who should have won" are "very seldom one and the same person."[7] So if the object is to discriminate between the party that has won—the Enlightenment—and the party that should have won—presumably, according to Lessing's rule, orthodoxy; if, in other words, the object is to carry out a critique of the victory of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy, then one must, as

things stand, drag out the dusty books that are to be considered the classical documents of the quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy. And yes, one must hear the arguments of both parties. Only by doing this, or more precisely, only by having the full course of that quarrel before one's eyes, may one hope to be able to attain a view of the hidden premises of both parties that is not corrupted by prejudices, and thus a principled judgment of right and wrong in their quarrel.[8]

The critical examination of the arguments and counterarguments brought forward in this quarrel leads to the conclusion that there can be no question of a refutation of the "externally" understood basic tenets of the tradition. For all these tenets rest on the irrefutable premise that God is omnipotent and His will unfathomable. If God is omnipotent, then miracles and revelations in general, and in particular the Biblical miracles and revelations, are possible. Of course for orthodoxy, and therefore also for the Enlightenment, it is a question not so much of the possibility or impossibility as of the reality or unreality of the Biblical miracles and revelations; but in fact almost all the Enlightenment's attempts to demonstrate the unreality of the Biblical miracles and revelations depend on the express or tacit premise that the impossibility of miracles and revelations in general is established or demonstrable. Yet in carrying out their critique, precisely the most radical Enlighteners learned—if not as something clearly known, then at least as something vividly felt—that as a consequence of the irrefutability of orthodoxy's ultimate premise, all individual assertions resting on this premise are unshakable. Nothing shows more clearly that this is the case than the main weapon which they employed, and which they handled so adeptly, so masterfully, that it—it alone, one might say—decided the victory of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy. This weapon is mockery. As Lessing, who was in a position to know, put it, they attempted by means of mockery to "laugh" orthodoxy out of a position from which it could not be dislodged by any proofs supplied by Scripture or even by

reason. Thus the Enlightenment's mockery of the teachings of the tradition is not the successor of a prior refutation of these teachings; it does not bring to expression the amazement of unprejudiced men at the power of manifestly absurd prejudices; but it *is* the refutation: it is in mockery that the liberation from "prejudices" that had supposedly been already cast off is actually first accomplished; at the very least, the mockery is the admittedly supplementary but still decisive legitimation of a liberty acquired by whatsoever means.[9] Thus the importance of mockery for the Enlightenment's critique of religion is an indirect proof of the irrefutability of orthodoxy. As a result, orthodoxy was able to survive the attack of the Enlightenment, and all later attacks and retreats, unchanged in its essence.[10]

But, although the Enlightenment's attack on orthodoxy failed, the battle of the two hostile powers has still had a highly consequential positive result for the Enlightenment: the Enlightenment has succeeded, one may say provisionally, in defending itself, for its part, against the attack of orthodoxy. Even if—to cite an example that is more than an example—it could not prove the impossibility or the unreality of miracles, it could demonstrate the unknowability of miracles as such, and thus protect itself against the claims of orthodoxy. Thus, what is true of the Enlightenment's offensive criticism is not true of its defensive criticism. Through the quarrel between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy it became more clearly and easily recognized than it had been before that the premises of orthodoxy—the reality of creation, miracles, and revelation—are not known (philosophically or historically) but only believed, and that they therefore do not have the binding character peculiar to the known. And not only that: whereas pre-Enlightenment science was in a certain harmony with the doctrines of belief, the new science, which proved itself in the battle against orthodoxy, if it did not indeed have its very raison d'être in that battle, stood in often concealed but, at bottom, always active and thus always re-emerging opposition to belief. Thus the emergence of the new science brought it

about that fundamental teachings of the tradition, deemed knowable by the premises of the older science, were now considered more and more to be merely believed. The undermining of natural theology and of natural right, which was prepared, to say the least, in the Age of Enlightenment, is the most important example, indeed the specific sign, of this development. The final result is that unbelieving science and belief no longer have, as in the Middle Ages, the common ground of natural knowledge, on which a meaningful quarrel between belief and unbelief is possible, but rather any understanding of even the possibility of an opposition between them was on the verge of being lost. Orthodoxy actually had no share in the world created by the Enlightenment and its heirs, the world of "modern culture"; if it remained true to itself, it did not even have access to this world; it survived the nineteenth century as a misunderstood relic of a forgotten past, more despised than wondered at.

Thus the Enlightenment was not distracted from the construction of its world by the failure of its attack on orthodoxy. One must rather say that it was forced into constructing a world by this very failure. For it would not rest content with dismissing the tenets of orthodoxy as not known but merely believed; having been impressed by the claim of these tenets, it wanted to refute them. But the tenets that the world is the creation of the omnipotent God, that miracles are therefore possible in it, that man is in need of revelation for the guidance of his life, cannot be refuted by experience or by the principle of contradiction; for neither does experience speak against the guidance of the world and of man by an unfathomable God, nor does the concept of an unfathomable God contain a contradiction within itself. Thus if one wished to refute orthodoxy, there remained no other way but to attempt to prove that the world and life are perfectly intelligible without the assumption of an unfathomable God. That is, the refutation of orthodoxy required the success of a system. Man had to establish himself theoretically and practically as master of

the world and master of his life; the world created by him had to erase the world merely "given" to him; then orthodoxy would be more than refuted—it would be "outlived." Animated by the hope of being able to "overcome" orthodoxy through the perfection of a system, and hence hardly noticing the failure of its actual attack on orthodoxy, the Enlightenment, striving for victory with truly Napoleonic strategy, left the impregnable fortress of orthodoxy in the rear, telling itself that the enemy would not and could not venture any sally. Renouncing the impossible direct refutation of orthodoxy, it devoted itself to its own proper work, the civilization of the world and of man. And if this work had prospered, then perhaps there would have been no need for further proof of the justice of the Enlightenment's victory over orthodoxy; indeed as long as it did seem to prosper, it was believed that no further proof was needed. But doubts about the success of civilization soon became doubts about the possibility of civilization. Finally the belief is perishing that man can, by pushing back the "limits of Nature" further and further, advance to ever greater "freedom," that he can "subjugate" nature, "prescribe his own laws" for her, "generate" her by dint of pure thought. What is left, in the end, of the success of the Enlightenment? What finally proves to be the foundation and the vindication of this success?

The Enlightenment's critique of orthodoxy, in spite of its opposite appearance, is in truth purely defensive; it rests upon the radical renunciation of a refutation of orthodoxy; not the impossibility but only the unknowability of miracles was proven by the Enlightenment. More precisely: the unknowability of miracles on the premises of the new natural science. Thus the new natural science appears to be the proper vindication of the Enlightenment. In fact it cannot be disputed that the decisive thing for the Enlightenment's success was in the first place the belief that the science of Galileo, Descartes and Newton had refuted the science of Aristotle and the "natural world-view" explicated by it, which is also the "world-view" of the Bible. This success

was only delayed, not called into question, by the harmonizations between the "modern world-view" and the Bible which proliferated especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and which are often enough attempted even today; for ultimately these harmonizations always function as vehicles of Enlightenment, not as dams against it: the moderate Enlightenment is the best preparation of the soil for the radical Enlightenment. The new natural science, made acceptable by the moderate Enlightenment, entered upon its triumphant progress as the confederate and scout of the radical Enlightenment. But the new science itself could not long maintain the claim to have brought to light the truth about the world "in itself;" the "idealistic" interpretation of it was already latent in it from its beginning.[11] Modern "idealism"—perfected on the one hand in the discovery of the "aesthetic" as the purest insight into the creativity of man and, on the other hand, in the discovery of the radical "historicity" of man and his world as the definitive overcoming of the idea of an eternal nature, an eternal truth—finally understands modern natural science as one historically contingent form of "world-construction" among others; thus it makes possible the rehabilitation of the "natural world-view" on which the Bible depends. As soon as modern "idealism" has fully won out, the victory of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy thereby forfeits its originally decisive justification: the proof of the unknowability of miracles as such becomes invalid. For it is only under the premise of modern natural science that miracles are unknowable as such. So long as this science stood firm as the single way to the one truth, one could lull oneself with the view, certified by historical research, that the assertion of miracles is relative to the pre-scientific stage of mankind and thus has no dignity. But in the end it turns out that the facts certifying this view allow of the opposite interpretation: Is it not, ultimately, the very intention of defending oneself radically against miracles which is the basis of the concept of science that guides modern natural science? Was not the "unique" "world-construction" of mod-

ern natural science, according to which miracles are of course unknowable, devised expressly for the very purpose that miracles *be* unknowable, and that thus man be defended against the grip of the omnipotent God?

Thus modern natural science could be the basis or the instrument of the Enlightenment's victory over orthodoxy only so long as the old concept of truth, which it itself had already shaken, still ruled men's minds and, in particular, determined their conception of modern natural science. There was only one reason why it was temporarily possible to attempt to ground the modern ideal, the ideal of civilization, by means of natural science: it was believed that the new concept of nature was the adequate foundation of the new ideal precisely because the old concept of nature had been the adequate foundation of the old ideal. But this was a delusion. It had yet to be ascertained that the "end-free" and "value-free" nature of modern natural science can say nothing to man about "ends and values," that the "Is," understood in the sense of modern natural science, involves no reference at all to the "Ought," and that therefore the traditional view that the right life is a life according to nature becomes meaningless under the modern premise.[12] Hence, if modern natural science cannot justify the modern ideal, and if there is nonetheless unmistakably a relation between the modern ideal and modern natural science, one sees oneself compelled to ask whether it is not, on the contrary, the modern ideal that is in truth the basis of modern natural science, and thus whether it is not precisely a new belief rather than the new knowledge that justifies the Enlightenment.

If the question is posed in this latter form, it loses the disreputability that understandably clings to the question of the moral source of modern natural science. For even the most devout adherents of this science concede that the arrival of a new ideal, a new conception of the right life for man—even if only secondary to the success of natural science—was decisive for the victory of the Enlightenment over orthodoxy. And in fact, in their view, the meaning of

this ideal amounts to the ideal of freedom as the autonomy of man and his culture. But this view can be maintained only if one confuses "freedom" understood as autonomy with the "freedom" of conscience, the "freedom" of philosophizing, political "freedom," or the philosophic tradition's ideal of autarky. Freedom as the autonomy of man and his culture is neither the original nor the final justification of the Enlightenment. This ideal was viable, rather, only during a peaceful interlude: in the interlude when the battle against orthodoxy seemed to have been fought out, while the revolt of the forces unchained by the Enlightenment had not yet broken out against their liberator; when, living in a comfortable house, one could no longer see the foundation on which the house had been erected,—in this epoch, after the decisive entry into the state of civilization, one could forget the state of nature, which alone was capable of legitimating civilization, and hence, in place of the primary ideal of civilization as the self-assertion of man against overpowering nature, one could set up the "higher" ideal of culture as the sovereign creation of the spirit. The Jewish tradition gives a more adequate answer than the philosophy of culture to the question of the original ideal of the Enlightenment. The Jewish tradition characterized defection from the Law, rebellion against the Law, in most, if not all, cases as Epicureanism. Whatever facts, impressions or suspicions led the rabbis to this characterization, this description of defection, it is corroborated by historical investigation of the original Epicureanism. Epicurus is truly the classic of the critique of religion. Like no other, his whole philosophy presupposes the fear of superhuman forces and of death as the danger threatening the happiness and repose of man; indeed, this philosophy is hardly anything but the classical means of allaying the fear of divinity [Numen] and death by showing them to be "empty of content." The influence of the Epicurean critique on the Enlightenment comes to light if one follows the tracks of the Enlightenment step by step from its beginnings down to Anatole France: the Epicurean critique is the foundation, or more

exactly the foreground, of the Enlightenment critique. The Epicurean critique thus undergoes an essential change in the age of the Enlightenment. Of course for the Enlightenment too, and just precisely for the Enlightenment, it is a question of man's happiness, his peace of mind, which is threatened preeminently or exclusively by religious ideas. But the Enlightenment understands this happy peace, this tranquillity, in a fundamentally different way from the original Epicureanism—it understands "tranquillity" in such a way that the civilization, the subjection, the improvement of nature, and particularly of human nature, becomes indispensable for its sake. While the battle of the Epicureans against the terrifying delusion of religion was aimed preeminently at the terror of this delusion, the Enlightenment aimed preeminently at the delusoriness itself: regardless of whether the religious ideas are terrifying or comforting—qua delusions, they cheat men of the real goods, of the enjoyment of the real goods; they steer men away from the real "this world" to an imaginary "other world," and thus seduce them into letting themselves be cheated of the possession and enjoyment of the real, "this-worldly" goods by the greedy clergy, who "live" from those delusions. Liberated from the religious delusion, awakened to sober awareness of his real situation, taught by bad experiences that he is threatened by a stingy, hostile nature, man recognizes as his sole salvation and duty not so much "to cultivate his garden" as in the first place to plant himself a "garden" by making himself the master and owner of nature. This "crude" conception has long since been "overcome," of course, by a conception which completely exposes the self-proclaiming and self-betraying tendency in the transformation of Epicureanism into the Enlightenment. The latest and purest expression of this is that the religious ideas are rejected not because they are terrifying but because they are desirable, because they are comforting: religion is not a tool which man has forged for dark reasons in order to torment himself, to make life unnecessarily difficult, but rather a way out chosen for very obvious reasons,

in order to escape the terror and the hopelessness of life, which cannot be eradicated by any progress of civilization, in order to make his life easier. A new kind of fortitude, which forbids itself every flight from the horror of life into comforting delusion, which accepts the eloquent descriptions of the misery of man without God as a proof of the goodness of its cause, reveals itself eventually as the ultimate and purest ground for the rebellion against the tradition of the revelation. This new fortitude, being the willingness to look man's forsakenness in its face, being the courage to welcome the terrible truth, being toughness against the inclination of man to deceive himself about his situation, is probity.[13] It is this probity, "intellectual probity," that bids us reject all attempts to "mediate" between the Enlightenment and orthodoxy—both those of the moderate Enlightenment and especially those of the post-Enlightenment synthesis—not only as inadequate, but also and especially as without probity; it forces the alternative "Enlightenment or orthodoxy" and, since it believes it finds the deepest unprobity in the principles of the tradition itself, it bids us to renounce the very word "God." This atheism with a good conscience, or even with a bad conscience, differs precisely by its conscientiousness, its morality, from the conscienceless atheism at which the past shuddered; the "Epicurean," who became an "idealist" in the persecutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who, instead of being willing to "live in hiding" safely, learned to fight and die for honor and truth, finally becomes the "atheist" who rejects for reasons of conscience the belief in God. Thus it becomes clear that this atheism, compared not only with the original Epicureanism but also with the generally "radical" atheism of the age of Enlightenment, is a descendant of the tradition grounded in the Bible: it accepts the thesis, the negation of the Enlightenment, on the basis of a way of thinking which became possible only through the Bible. Although it refuses, since it is unwilling to disguise its unbelief in any way, to represent itself as a "synthesis" of the Enlightenment and orthodoxy, yet it itself is

the latest, most radical, most unassailable harmonization of these opposed positions. This atheism, the heir and judge of the belief in revelation, of the centuries-old, millennia-old struggle between belief and unbelief, and finally of the short-lived but by no means therefore inconsequential romantic longing for the lost belief, confronting orthodoxy in complex sophistication formed out of gratitude, rebellion, longing and indifference, and also in simple probity, is according to its own claim as capable of an original understanding of the human roots of the belief in God as no earlier, no less complex-simple philosophy ever was. The last word and the ultimate justification of the Enlightenment is the atheism stemming from probity, which overcomes orthodoxy radically by understanding it radically, free of both the polemical bitterness of the Enlightenment and the equivocal reverence of romanticism.

Thus at last the "truth" of the alternative "orthodoxy or Enlightenment" is revealed as the alternative "orthodoxy or atheism." Orthodoxy, with its hostile eye, recognized from early on, from the beginning, that this is the case. Now it is no longer contested even by the enemies of orthodoxy. The situation thus formed, the present situation, appears to be insoluble for the Jew who cannot be orthodox and who must consider purely political Zionism, the only "solution of the Jewish problem" possible on the basis of atheism, as a resolution that is indeed highly honorable but not, in earnest and in the long run, adequate. This situation not only appears insoluble but actually is so, as long as one clings to the modern premises. If finally there is in the modern world only the alternative "orthodoxy or atheism," and if on the other hand the need for an enlightened Judaism is urgent, then one sees oneself compelled to ask whether enlightenment is necessarily modern enlightenment. Thus one sees oneself induced—provided one does not know from the outset, as one cannot know from the outset, that only new, unheard-of, ultra-modern thoughts can resolve our perplexity—to apply for aid to the medieval Enlightenment, the Enlightenment of Maimonides.

But has not the Enlightenment of Maimonides long since been overcome? Is it not the precursor and model of just that moderate Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that was least able to stand its ground? Is it not even altogether more "radical" in many respects, more dangerous to the spirit of Judaism, than the modern Enlightenment? Is it not based on the irretrievable Aristotelian cosmology? Does it not stand or fall with the dubious allegorical method of interpretation? Is not the modern Enlightenment therefore, with all its questionableness, still preferable to the medieval?

It would be unpardonable to ignore these or similar doubts. Rather than discuss them thoroughly point by point, which would be possible only in the framework of an interpretation of Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed,* we shall attempt in what follows to point out the leading idea of the medieval Enlightenment that has become lost to the modern Enlightenment and its heirs, and through an understanding of which many modern certainties and doubts lose their force: the idea of Law.

CHAPTER 1

The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns in the Philosophy of Judaism: Notes on Julius Guttmann, *The Philosophy of Judaism*

I

There is no inquiry into the history of philosophy that is not at the same time a *philosophical* inquiry. Without question there is a longstanding need in scholarship for a handbook of the history of the philosophy of Judaism resting throughout on the most thorough knowledge both of the sources and of previous studies of them; and when this need is met so completely as it is by Julius Guttmann's work, *The Philosophy of Judaism,*[1] the intelligent reader will first of all be very glad to be instructed in general and in detail by this prominent expert, and grateful to have the use of this long-lacking and henceforth indispensable handbook. The same intelligent reader will certainly soon realize, if he does not know or assume it from the outset, that Guttmann would scarcely have been induced to write his *Philosophy of Judaism* by the previously mentioned need of scholarship alone, even combined with the additional need of collecting the results of his own researches, hitherto scattered in many separate studies and lecture notes: Guttmann's project is the historical exposition of the philosophical problem that most engages his interest, viz. the problem of the "methodological value of religion" (10).

So as not to misunderstand Guttmann's posing of the problem, one does well to recall his earlier work, "Religion and Science in Medieval and Modern Thought." At the end of this work, in express reference to Kant on the one hand and *Schleiermacher* on the other, he identifies as the task of "philosophy of religion" "the analysis of the religious consciousness" in its "automony . . . over against knowledge and morality" (66f.), or more precisely, "the definition of religion as against all other areas of subject matter and consciousness, the elaboration of the specifically religious world and its truth" (R69). Since he defines the problem of "philosophy of religion" in this way, he seems to view the task of philosophy in general as the understanding of "*culture*" articulated into its various "domains." Now it is striking, however, that in spite of his unmistakable inclination towards philosophy of culture, he very assiduously avoids the expressions "culture" or "cultural field," and prefers the more formal and hence less prejudicial expressions "field of validity," "field of truth," "domain of subject matter," "domain of consciousness." In this way he already suggests the suspicion that religion cannot be rightly understood in the framework of the concept of "culture." For philosophy of culture understands by "culture" the "spontaneous product" of the human spirit—but religion in its proper sense does not have this character (R65); and besides, the other "domains of validity" allow of being conceived as "partial domains of truth"—but religion raises the claim to universality (R70). The claim to universality on the part of "culture," which in its own view rests on spontaneous production, seems to be opposed by the claim to universality on the part of religion, which in its own view is not produced by man but *given* to him. Now Guttmann admittedly does not go so far: as we have already noted, he believes that "sphere of validity" is the genus that comprehends both "culture" and religion. But in any case he finds himself driven to a remarkable distancing from philosophy of culture by the fact of religion as such, which thereby proves to be one crux of philosophy of culture.[2]

Guttmann leaves us in no doubt that the problem of the "methodological value of religion" is not a *primary* problem. One can say outright that his entire history of the philosophy of Judaism has no other intention, or at least no other result, than to demonstrate that the "methodological" formulation of the question, in spite of or because of its lack of primariness, offers the only guarantee of an adequate scientific understanding of the Bible. First of all, concerning its lack of primariness: neither does it emerge directly from religion (whether Biblical or Talmudic), nor is it a direct consequence of the conflict between (Biblical) religion and (Greek) philosophy. Out of this conflict the only question that arises directly is the question of whether the teachings of the revelation or the teachings of philosophy are *true,* and specifically the questions, *inter alia,* whether the world is created or eternal, whether providence extends to individuals or only to species, whether the soul or only the intellect is immortal—the questions, that is, with which medieval Jewish philosophy is primarily occupied, and the varied treatments of which and answers to which are thoughtfully and thoroughly presented by Guttmann. The alternative "revelation or reason?" is, to be sure, replaced at once, so to speak from the first moment on, by the harmonizing decision that the teachings of revelation are identical with the teachings of reason. To begin with, then, "religion and philosophy are not distinguished from one another *methodologically,* but harmonized with one another *substantively*" (10). In this way both philosophy and religion undergo essential modifications: the problems of philosophy are "framed and formed" from the "religious point of view," and thus the "concepts of ancient metaphysics" undergo "essential transformations" in the direction of the "personalistic religion of the Bible" (10, 63f.); and on the other hand there arises a "striking transformation of the content of Biblical and Talmudic religion" (56), a more or less thorough-going abandonment of the Biblical concept of God, world, and man in favor of the Greek-philosophic (cf. esp. 36f., 120ff., 149ff., 186ff., 194, 198ff., 205, 256).[3] It

became possible to preserve the Biblical conception more successfully in the element of philosophy only when medieval metaphysics, deriving from pagan antiquity, was replaced by the metaphysics of the Enlightenment (issuing directly from Christianity, indirectly from the Bible) (cf. 304). Of course, the ancient metaphysics that was authoritative for the Middle Ages was "teleological" and thus "capable of an accommodation with the religion of *revelation,*" while the "mechanistic transformation" of metaphysics in modernity, particularly "in Spinoza, made it necessary to break with the religion of revelation" (295, cf. also 156); but this loss is outweighed by the fact that it is precisely from the spirit of the "personalistic piety" of the *Bible* that the "tendency to a mechanistic concept of nature," the horrified rejection, as of "a kind of polytheism," of the supposition of forces acting teleologically, can arise and, in modern times, has in fact arisen (18f. and 151). Thus, even if the accommodation of Judaism with philosophy carried out (by *Mendelssohn*) on the basis of the modern Enlightenment is "essentially closer to the Jewish tradition" than the corresponding achievement of the medieval neo-Platonists and Aristotelians (305), nevertheless one cannot acquiesce in it. This is not only because Mendelssohn himself diverges from the Jewish tradition on one essential point (305), but also and especially because he clings to one premise of the entire Jewish tradition that he himself has already undermined: the idea of the revealed, given religion. Mendelssohn denies that the communication of rational truths by revelation is possible; for him, therefore—and all the more so since he admits no super-rational truths of faith—the revelation can have only a very limited meaning; indeed "there remains for him no place for the truth of the historical revelation" (317). Thus to be sure the *content* of the Bible is better preserved by Mendelssohn than by his medieval forerunners; but he can no longer account for its *form,* for its revealed character, as satisfactorily as his predecessors. This fact already suggests the surmise that if the content of the Bible is to be *perfectly* preserved in the ele-

ment of philosophy, the traditional conception of its form, that is, the belief that it is revealed, must be surrendered. The Bible must no longer be understood as revealed, but as the product of the religious consciousness; and the task of "philosophy of religion" no longer consists in the harmonizing of the doctrines of revelation with the doctrines of reason, but in the analysis of the religious consciousness. And hence Guttmann in particular, who regards the determination of the "methodological value of religion" as the proper task of "philosophy of religion," had to surrender beforehand the belief in revelation (pp. 12f. and 20). All in all, then, the history of the philosophy of Judaism produces the doctrine that the outwardly so inconsiderable "formal," "methodological" way of thinking has, in the breakdown of the outwardly so much more imposing "substantive," "metaphysical" attempt at a solution, proved to be *the* condition of the possibility of an adequate scientific understanding of the Bible.

It cannot be denied that Guttmann's argument for the superiority of modern over medieval philosophy—and this argument is the intellectual bond that ties together his very painstaking and detailed individual analyses—is extraordinarily attractive. The obvious doubt to which it is nevertheless open is indicated by Guttmann himself, who says,

> As much as the medieval thinkers are more strongly rooted as total personalities in the Jewish tradition and way of life, and belief in the divine authority of the revelation is more self-evident to them, to the same extent do the modern thinkers, in their theoretical interpretation of Judaism, hold fast with the greater staying power to the original meaning of its central religious ideas (342).

This statement admits of the interpretation that the adequate scientific knowledge of Judaism is bought at the cost of the belief in the authority of revelation, at the cost of a considerable loss to the Jewish "substance of life;" generally stated, that the owl of Minerva begins its flight

at dusk. Guttmann however does not think so fatalistically, so hopelessly. His meaning is rather that the scientific knowledge of Judaism is precisely an act of Judaism's self-assertion. Judaism is more endangered in the modern world, by the modern world, than ever before—granted; but its scientific self-knowledge is not so much a symptom of its illness as rather the most suitable means of relieving or even curing it. Judaism can overcome the danger on which it has fallen through the victory of reflection over primariness not by means of the necessarily fictive return to a point before reflection, but only by means of the decisive completion of the reflection: the least primary, least naive formulation of the problem is now the only one capable of preserving the primary, and that by teaching how to *understand* it.

Thus the result that Guttmann reaches can be construed in completely opposite ways. One would have to come to terms with this awkward state of affairs if Guttmann's thesis, as we have understood it, corresponded to the facts. But have we understood it correctly? We took Guttmann to mean that modern Judaism, standing much less steadily on its feet, has at its disposal an essentially more adequate philosophic understanding of the content of the Jewish tradition than the much more vital medieval Judaism. This view, as has been shown, is ambiguous; but it is not only ambiguous, but also paradoxical, since it asserts a paradoxical incongruity between life and thought. This incongruity may be evident without more ado to the modern way of thinking, but one cannot deny that it is nevertheless dubious. And so we ask: does Guttmann actually mean that modern philosophy enables Judaism better than medieval philosophy does to preserve intellectually the content of its tradition, albeit with the surrender of the belief in revelation?

II

Guttmann concludes his history of the philosophy of Judaism with a critical exposition of the work of Hermann

Cohen. If "Cohen's great achievement" (362) is the fullest form in which modern Jewish thought has been expressed, the barrier dividing modern thought from Judaism must be most distinctly visible in it. Guttmann's objection against Cohen is that Cohen can no longer "affirm" the existence of God "in its absolute reality:" on Cohen's premises, even the existence of God must "find its logical place within the posits of consciousness" (346). "The methodological bases of his system prevent" Cohen, even in his later period, when he was essentially closer to Judaism than before, "from conceiving of God as a reality" (361, cf. also 351). This inability is the more surprising since it is after all in Cohen, far more than in Mendelssohn and, particularly, far more than in the medieval philosophers, that the content of Judaism comes into prominence.

Cohen is by no means the only one marked by the inability to "conceive of God as a reality." The resoluteness of Guttmann's insistence, in the programmatic statements at the end of his earlier work "Religion and Science in Medieval and Modern Thought," that "philosophy of religion" must not only deal with "religious experience" but must also take account of the "objective aspect" of this experience and, particularly, the "reality-character of religious objects" (R 68f.), testifies to the fact that the understanding, or even the very recognition, of this "reality-character" is the characteristic difficulty of the modern "philosophy of religion" inaugurated by Schleiermacher. Now, modern "philosophy of religion" differs from its earlier version in that it no longer has metaphysics as its foundation, but rather theory of knowledge (R 72). That is: no longer, or less and less, does modern philosophy understand man as a member of the cosmos, as one (though an exceptional) natural being among other natural beings; on the contrary, it understands nature from man or, more precisely, from consciousness as man's defining property. Precisely for this reason it cannot "discover" God from the cosmos, as the *creator,* but only from consciousness. Now whereas under the domination of the cosmological orientation—in spite of or be-

cause of all the difficulties concentrated in the problem of "analogy"—God's "reality," God's "absolute actuality," independent of consciousness, was self-evident, as soon as the modern orientation has been fully established, this actuality becomes essentially unintelligible. The difficulty becomes no less, but even greater, as soon as "consciousness" is replaced by "existence," by "man."

But what is existential philosophy doing here in these observations on Guttmann's *Philosophy of Judaism,* when Guttmann himself says not a single word about it, even in its Jewish form, unless it be in that bare allusion to the "metaphysical and irrationalistic tendencies that generally dominate the thought of the time" (362)? But can he not still be referring to it, even if he does not speak of it in detail, or explicitly at all? And is not that bare allusion to existential philosophy rather, in fact, a bare dismissal of it? We shall attempt to develop somewhat more fully what Guttmann meant and intimated, by following the signpost he set up in his critique of Cohen.

We had said that the difficulty in which modern thought finds itself becomes no less, but even greater, as soon as "consciousness" is replaced by "existence," by "man." For it is on the basis of this development that the fundamental cosmological distinction eternal/corruptible —authoritative for the older philosophy, preserved in the fundamental theological distinction God/creation, and called into question by the fundamental modern distinction spirit/nature—finally becomes completely obsolete. For if it comes down to the fundamental distinction man/nature and if, accordingly, it is asserted that the existence of God is not intelligible from nature but only from man, then one loses the sole guarantee that the existence of God will not get completely "internalized" and thereby evaporated. An unmistakable sign of this is that the doctrine of creation as the creation also of *non*-human nature is an even greater difficulty for existential philosophy than for idealistic philosophy. This appears most clearly in Friedrich Gogarten, who combatted idealistic philosophy from the ground of

existential philosophy perhaps more resolutely than anyone else. To be sure, even Gogarten says that the creation is "full of, overflowing with" the "gifts and works of God." But he continues: "And thus the works of God, in which God's being-for-us and, correspondingly, our being-from-God come to sight, in which, that is, He reveals Himself as our creator, in which 'the good' is God's gift and claim together in one–these works of God consist in the fact that it is from one another that we men are what we are and who we are;" "this being-from [is] the primary being of man, and therefore the being proper to man. As such, it must not be understood as causal being, as, of course, the being of things, being in animate and inanimate nature, is understood."[4] One sees that it remains completely obscure here whether the "causal being" of the natural things must itself be understood as created being. In a more recent publication Gogarten indeed retains the equivocal reference to "causal being" and even cites a passage from Luther's commentary on Genesis (in which, of course, the matter under discussion is *all* creatures), thereby appropriating as his own the assertion of creation in its original sense; but in his own statements he omits studiously, as it were, the createdness of non-human nature. Thus he says: ". . . wherever the law is fulfilled in its full sense, there the *creation* too becomes clear again, revealed again. Therein it is revealed how God created *man*."[5] We believe we are doing Gogarten no injustice if we say that for him, to the extent that the theological tradition no longer holds him in its sway, creation has meaning only as the creation of man. And if Gogarten is to be taken as representative of existential philosophy, we may furthermore say that existential philosophy is even less capable than idealistic philosophy of understanding the doctrine of creation in its original, Biblical sense. For while idealistic philosophy no less than existential philosophy had torn nature apart from men as a matter of principle (under the terms "Is" and "Ought," or "nature" and "morality"), it had nevertheless preserved, thanks to its connection with Kant, the clearest memory that the "idea

of creation," although it "[will] not explain theoretically the origin of the world," nevertheless affects also and primarily "the relationship between God and world," the relationship between God and non-human nature (cf. 14). Cohen, above all others, not only did not leave it obscure, but even made it the starting-point of his theological argument, that the idea of God (which is properly intelligible, to be sure, only from the moral consciousness) has a necessary bearing on the "causal being" of nature (347 ff.). Thus idealistic philosophy proves superior to existential philosophy in a decisive, not to say in *the* decisive point: it is superior because of its memory of the original meaning of the doctrine of creation. That this doctrine was admittedly only remembered by Cohen, and no longer believed, is shown not only by his inability, pointed out by Guttmann, to "conceive of God as a reality," but also, far more directly, by his answer to the objection of an orthodox Jew against his theology: to the objection, "and what has become of the בורא עולם [Creator of the World]?", Cohen had no other answer than —to weep,[6] and thus to confess that the gap between his belief and the belief of the tradition is unbridgeable. We do not doubt—indeed we know, since it has been openly and unhesitatingly asserted—that the existential philosophers could not share Cohen's difficulty in answering: so completely lost is even the memory of the original sense of the doctrine of creation. But if idealistic philosophy, at least that of Cohen, thus proves superior to existential philosophy in the decisive point, still nobody will dispute that, for the rest, existential philosophy does grasp more securely than idealistic philosophy the "existential" meaning of the Bible. But this very superiority of existential philosophy over idealistic philosophy merely repeats the corresponding superiority of idealistic philosophy over medieval philosophy. Thus it becomes clear that the replacement of idealistic philosophy by existential philosophy presents not a radical break but only a progression: in this replacement too, the law posited by Guttmann with regard to the replacement of cosmological philosophy by idealistic philosophy

still holds true, the law that progress in the "theoretical understanding" of the Bible is purchased at the price of considerable loss to the "substance of life" of the religion of revelation. And thus, since idealistic philosophy and existential philosophy go together, we may draw this conclusion: whereas under the domination of the cosmological orientation there existed the danger that, with the complete inviolability of the belief in the existence of God as the creator also and precisely of nature, the content of the revelation would be misconstrued in the sense of Greek "humanism," now, after the surrender of the cosmological orientation, there is the opposite danger, that with the intellectual preservation of the "existential" sense of the Bible not only the belief in revelation,[7] as it seemed at first, but also the belief in creation, will be surrendered. It is therefore not "only" the belief in revelation that has fallen into danger through modern philosophy.

It is now clear that we have considerably misunderstood Guttmann. In his critique of Cohen it comes to light that he asserts not *the,* but only *a certain* superiority of modern philosophy over medieval philosophy. Modern philosophy—so runs his thesis in truth—is more capable than medieval philosophy of preserving intellectually the "*inner world*" of belief; but it is less capable of acknowledging the essential relation of the God who rules this "inner world" to "external" *nature.* The least one has to demand under these circumstances is that modern and medieval philosophy must somehow supplement each other. It is only on the basis of this demand that one can reach a radical understanding of Guttmann's extraordinarily energetic interest in medieval Jewish philosophy. Thus it is no accident that of the approximately 360 pages of the *Philosophy of Judaism,* 245 are devoted solely to medieval Jewish philosophy. One would completely misunderstand Guttmann's philosophic motive if one were to see in this numerical proportion a mere reflection of the proportion between the amount of medieval Jewish philosophical literature and the amount of late antique and modern Jewish philosophi-

cal literature, or even a reflection of the proportions of their historical influence, or if one were to believe that Guttmann gives so great a preponderance to medieval philosophy only in order to show how much progress we have made. Guttmann knows too well that we have every reason to go to school to the medieval philosophers. It is for this reason, ultimately, that he has foregone even a discussion of existential philosophy: he does not deceive himself as to the fact that it is not the *natural progression* from idealistic philosophy to a "*new* thinking," but rather the *resolute return* from the newest thinking to the *old* thinking, that can put an end to our present-day difficulty. And even if he concedes to modern philosophy a certain superiority over medieval philosophy, still he makes even this concession only with a view to the fact that modern philosophy brings the "central religious ideas" of the Jewish tradition into prominence more than medieval philosophy does: he thereby acknowledges the Jewish tradition, and thus a non-modern, pre-modern court, as the judge of modern thought, in this way demonstrating most clearly his insight into the essential inadequacy of modern thought.

III

As we have seen, Guttmann asserts not *the* but only *a certain* superiority of modern Jewish philosophy over medieval. Now even this very limited assertion, which we would understand in the sense explained above, rests on the premise that belief in the revelation does not belong to those "central religious ideas" of Judaism whose preservation in the element of reflection has been purchased at the price of surrendering the belief in revelation. But does not this belief *necessarily* belong to the "central religious ideas" of Judaism, and not only as one inseparable factor among many, but as the necessary condition of the possibility of them all? Do those ideas still remain themselves, or do they not rather change their meaning *from the ground up* if one understands them no longer as given by God, but as pro-

duced by the "religious consciousness" of man, albeit "before God"? If, in fact, Judaism is *essentially* a "monotheistic religion of revelation" (10, cf. also 20, 41 and 53), then medieval philosophy stands incomparably closer to Judaism than modern philosophy. For at least "the formal recognition of the authority of the revelation is a self-evident presupposition even for the most radical thinkers of the Jewish Middle Ages insofar as they wish to remain Jews" (259). In the light of this powerful, compelling point of superiority, one can disregard with a good conscience, when comparing medieval and modern philosophy, the fact, doubtless justly emphasized by Guttmann, that there are important "religious ideas" of Judaism that are on the whole grasped more clearly and securely by the moderns than by the earlier thinkers.

For what "central religious ideas," specifically, are grasped more clearly and securely by the moderns than by the medievals, and by what path do the moderns arrive at this superiority? These ideas are nothing other than the core of the Biblical religion; but "the religion of the Bible has its specific character in the ethical personalism of its consciousness of God" (12). And these ideas are secured by the moderns not through exegesis, not theologically, but through analysis of the "religious consciousness," an analysis inaugurated by the "epoch-making" achievement of Schleiermacher (R63–67). Now its "personalistic character" puts "Biblical religion into effective opposition to the other type of spiritual and universal religion, which, despite every essential difference, nevertheless lies at the basis of both mysticism and pantheism" (14). It is on the basis of this typology, whose modern origin is written on its face, that Guttmann demonstrates the superiority of modern over medieval philosophy. For the medieval philosophers are, according to him, inferior to the moderns precisely because they re-interpret Biblical religion in the sense of the religion of "mysticism or contemplation," which is diametrically opposed to it (v. esp. 159 and 201). But if the idea of an analysis of the "religious consciousness" finally turns

out to be *the* condition for the possibility of the intellectual preservation of the Biblical "type of piety," then one cannot dodge the question: in orientation to what "type of piety," actually, was this idea originally conceived? Guttmann's answer is unequivocal: Schleiermacher's "characterization of religion agrees in its decisive factors with the descriptions of religious experience often given in the literature of *mysticism* and its associated concept of religion" (R65). Although "later research diverges very far from Schleiermacher's views in its interpretation of the content of religion," although it has thus taken up precisely the analysis of the characteristically Biblical "type of piety," nonetheless "its working method is determined by [Schleiermacher]" (R66). Now Guttmann, who sees the task of "philosophy of religion" as the determination of the "*methodological* value of religion," is the last one who needs to be taught that a "method" is never an indifferent, impartial technique, but always pre-determines the possible content. Hence there emerges, from insight into the genesis of the modern method of analysis of "religious consciousness," the *suspicion*—which at first of course is *only* a suspicion—that the modern method, while leading to a surer knowledge of the Biblical "type of piety" than the medieval method, permits only a supplementary correction of the concept of religion acquired in connection with "mysticism,"—just as medieval philosophy could bring into prominence only by way of supplement, only in the framework of the predetermining Aristotelian or neo-Platonic way of thinking, Biblical religion's concept of God and its "inner attitude." In other words, we harbor the unallayable suspicion that the same thing emerges in modern philosophy as in medieval philosophy, that is, the betrayal of the Biblical heritage for the sake of an alien "piety." And indeed, the betrayal committed by modern philosophy appears to us much graver than the lapse of its predecessors: not only because the moderns are unequivocally instructed by a modern court, that is, by their own historical research, about the danger of this very betrayal, and thus knowingly do what

the medievals did inadvertently; not only because they have surrendered the belief in revelation, which was a "self-evident presupposition" for their predecessors; but above all, because the moderns commit their betrayal in a much more covert and therefore much more "substance"-destroying manner. Such at least would have to be the verdict of one who acknowledges the Jewish tradition as the judge of modern thought.

But, however one must or may decide our *querelle des anciens et des modernes,* it is established that for medieval philosophy, in contrast to modern philosophy, not only is the recognition of the authority of the revelation a "self-evident presupposition," but the "philosophic justification" of this recognition is an essential desideratum. Guttmann goes even further. According to his view, "philosophy of religion" is actually *the* original achievement of medieval philosophy. "To have made religion a problem for philosophy is the original achievement of the Middle Ages. Otherwise wholly dependent on the ancient tradition and productive only in the elaboration and extension of the received themes of thought, medieval thought here opened up a new problem area and brought a new theme into philosophic consciousness" (R3).

Guttmann's assertion that "philosophy of religion" is *the* original achievement of medieval philosophy is at first glance open to several doubts.[8] But even more debatable than the assertion itself, it seems to us, are the premises from which it derives such evidence as it has. Since Guttmann, as we have seen, admits only a certain superiority of medieval over modern philosophy, he does not see himself compelled to a radical critique of the basic modern concepts. In particular, therefore, he is free to proceed from modern divisions of philosophy in his study of the Middle Ages. If one starts from the division of philosophy into theory of knowledge, logic, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy of religion, thus assuming, for example, that the problems of natural theology and rational psychology are to be treated under philosophy of religion—and it is in this sense

that Guttmann calls Mendelssohn's "Phaedon" and "Morgenstunden" his "chief works of philosophy of religion" (304)—then one is in fact compelled to look for the originality of medieval philosophy exclusively or primarily in philosophy of religion. That one would arrive at a different conclusion if one started from the ancient division of philosophy—much more obvious, after all, in a study of the older philosophy—into logic, physics, metaphysics, ethics, and politics; and furthermore, that it is not merely a technical question whether to label a problem "metaphysical" or "religio-philosophic"—needs no further elucidation.

In spite of the questionableness of its premises, the assertion that "philosophy of religion" is *the* original achievement of medieval thought is quite justifiable. One need only provide it with the qualifications proposed by Guttmann himself. Guttmann does not deny, but expressly asserts, that medieval philosophy proposed "fundamental modifications" of ancient metaphysics; but in Guttmann's view, medieval philosophy thereby merely gave un-ancient answers to ancient questions, without essentially modifying the questions themselves; the only un-ancient *question* it posed is the question of the meaning and the possibility of revelation and the relationship between revelation and reason. Just as little does Guttmann deny that the "fundamental modifications" of ancient philosophy carried out by medieval philosophy (cf., e.g., 91, 130, 135 and 159) made possible, historically, the break with the ancient way of thinking carried out by modern philosophy, and thus that it is not only on account of its "philosophy of religion" that medieval philosophy concerns us; but this modification of ancient philosophy was carried out in the Middle Ages not so much for a philosophical purpose as from the need "to accommodate the world-view of ancient metaphysics to the personalistic religion of the Bible" (63f.). Thus the discussion of Guttmann's assertion that *the* original achievement of medieval thought is "philosophy of religion" threatens to become endless. Therefore it is time that we cease tearing this assertion from the only context within which it acquires a clear sense.

Guttmann obviously does not mean by his assertion that within medieval philosophy it is primarily its "philosophy of religion" that interests the present-day historian, who proceeds from present-day questions. What he *does* mean is that for medieval philosophy itself—and this is its specific difference from both ancient and modern philosophy —"philosophy of religion" stands at the center as its "specific task" (63) or, to speak more precisely, stands at the beginning as its primary task. For the religion with which medieval philosophy has to do is revealed religion; the problem posed by revelation is *the* problem of medieval philosophy, to such an extent that revelation is *constitutive* for this philosophy. The situation of philosophy was altered *from the ground up* by the reality of the revelation. We could wish for no more authoritative witness to this fact than *Maimonides*. Thus Maimonides sees himself compelled to supplement the three reasons collected by Alexander of Aphrodisias for the differences of opinion in philosophy, and thus for the difficulties of philosophizing, by the addition of a fourth reason. This new reason differs *essentially* from the three previous ones. For those three reasons concern the *natural* difficulties of philosophizing, whereas the reason added by Maimonides is *historical*. Maimonides says:

> *In our time* there is a fourth reason which Alexander did not mention because it did not exist among them, viz. habit and training. . . . So it goes with the opinions in which a man has grown up: he loves them and holds them fast and keeps himself away from diverging opinions. Thus for this reason, too, man is prevented from knowing the truth. This is the situation of the multitude with regard to the corporeality of God . . . because of their habituation to the *texts* in which they have a firm belief, to which they are habituated, and whose literal meaning appears to indicate the corporeality of God. . . .[9]

Now the Greeks certainly had no lack of texts that appeared—and not only *appeared*—to teach the corporeality of God, but these texts did not affect Greek philoso-

phy, since they were not authoritative. It is therefore not habituation to texts in general, the sovereignty of a tradition in general, that brings about a special impediment to philosophizing, but the habituation to texts of unconditional authority: the fact that a tradition based on revelation was introduced into the world of philosophy added to the *natural* difficulties of philosophizing, which are given with the "cave"-existence of man, the *historical* difficulty.[10] One may express oneself about the situation of philosophy under the domination of revelation as *enlightenedly* as Maimonides or as *gratefully* as the otherwise "more enlightened" Gersonides, who acknowledges in the revelation a "miraculous guidance" for rational inquiry;[11] but in any case, medieval philosophy differs from ancient, as from modern, philosophy because of the situation given with the reality of the revelation. Not only must every medieval philosopher take revelation into *consideration*—expressly or at least tacitly, sincerely or at least outwardly—in his treatment of all important questions; even more, for all medieval philosophers, "so long as they wish to remain Jews," at least "the formal recognition of the authority of revelation" is a "self-evident *presupposition*" (259). This statement is to be understood quite literally. It means first of all: there may be debate about what must be considered the *content* of revelation; there may thus be debate about the createdness or eternity of matter, about whether immortality belongs to the soul or only to the intellect, about the eternal perdurance or future destruction of the present world, etc. etc.; but no debate is possible about the reality of the revelation and about the obligation to obey it. And it also means: the recognition of the authority of the revelation is "*self-evident*." The medieval philosophers do indeed strive to demonstrate the philosophic possibility of the revelation and the historical reality of the revelation, but these arguments only confirm what was already established *before* argument, what was evident "of itself." For the possibility of the revelation follows from its reality, but its reality is known immediately—in spite of and because

of the mediating tradition, it is known immediately. That the revelation is real is *seen* by the seeing Jew in the superhuman wisdom and justice of the Torah, is *seen* by the seeing Muslim in the superhuman beauty of the Qur'an. Finally, Guttmann's statement means: the recognition of the authority of the revelation is a *presupposition* of philosophizing as such. This presupposition precedes all philosophizing: it is not laid as a foundation by human thought, but it is imposed beforehand upon human thought. Since the recognition of the authority of the revelation is *prior* to philosophizing and since the revelation lays claim to man *totally,* philosophizing is now possible only as *commanded* by the revealed law. It therefore no longer lies in the discretion of the man suited to philosophizing whether he will philosophize or not, in such a way that he would have to draw the natural consequences of his discretion and nothing more; it is now no longer undetermined whether the philosopher is appointed to philosophize by himself or by an authority (cf. Plato, *Apology* 28d); and it is no longer an obscure, enigmatic, multifarious admonition by which a god summons to philosophy (cf. Plato, *Ap.* 21a–b and *Phædo* 60e–61a); but rather the one God obliges the men suited to it, by a clear, unequivocal, simple command of His revealed law, to philosophize. This is the teaching of even and precisely the "most radical thinkers" of the Middle Ages, above all of Averroes himself. Out of the new *situation* of philosophizing, the obligation *by* the revelation, there thus emerges a new *problem* for the philosophers, their accountability *to* the revelation. Their "exoteric" writings have not so much the function of "persuading" or "urging" men to philosophize as the function of showing, by dint of "*legal speculation,*" that philosophizing is a duty, that it is in accord, in its form and in its content, with the meaning of the revelation.[12] In this sense we wholly adopt as our own Guttmann's assertion that *the* original achievement of the Middle Ages is "philosophy of religion:" medieval (Islamic and Jewish) philosophy differs specifically from both ancient and modern philosophy in that, understanding itself as both bound

and authorized by revelation, it sees as its first and most pressing concern the foundation of philosophy as a *legal foundation of philosophy.*

With this statement we have acquired a first indication of how the medieval philosophers understand religion: they understand it not as a "field of validity," nor as a "turn of consciousness," least of all as a "field of culture," but as *law.*

IV

The first and fundamental task of medieval philosophy is the legal foundation of philosophy, that is, first of all, the demonstration that the men suited to philosophizing are obligated and thus authorized to philosophize by the revealed law. At the same time, the legal foundation of philosophy guarantees that philosophizing as authorized by the law enjoys full freedom, is wholly or nearly as free as if it stood under no law. Philosophizing, thus authorized and set free, takes revelation, like all other existing things, as its theme. The *philosophic foundation of the law* that arises in this way differs from the legal foundation of philosophy in that the latter precedes all philosophizing as the ground of philosophy, while the former is itself a part of the philosophic structure. The revelation, *to* which philosophy as such is accountable, is thus *for* philosophy only *one* theme among others. And by no means is it even the first or central theme; rather, logic stands in the first place, and metaphysics stands at the center. We do not quite, or at least not quite yet, wish to assert that revelation is the last theme of medieval philosophy; we are content to repeat the assertion that it is one theme among others. While the legal foundation of philosophy is the basis of philosophy, the philosophic foundation of the law is a part, and not even the central part, of the philosophic structure.

But: in the philosophic foundation of the law, the presupposition of philosophizing comes under discussion itself, so that in a certain way it is made questionable. In any case, it is *only* in the philosophic foundation of the law that

it is treated philosophically, since in the legal foundation of philosophy it is handled exclusively legally. Hence the philosophic foundation of the law is the only place in the structure of medieval philosophy where the presupposition of (medieval) philosophizing becomes the theme of philosophy. Therefore one may say that the philosophic foundation of the law is nothing less than the philosophic basis of medieval philosophy. How it comes about that the philosophic foundation of the law is nevertheless only a secondary theme of medieval philosophy is, we may now confidently assert, the central problem in the interpretation of medieval philosophy. But one cannot answer this question, one cannot even define it in the requisite manner, without first having understood the philosophic foundation of the law given by the medieval philosophers. Therefore we turn to Guttmann with the question: what is the teaching of medieval "philosophy of religion"? To be sure, the only "philosophy of religion" that need concern us is that of the "rationalistic trend." For first of all, "in Arabic and Jewish philosophy . . . unbounded rationalism" reigns "widely" (R12), and in Jewish philosophy in particular it has "complete predominance" (72). Secondly, and above all, "rationalism with belief in revelation" would have to be the setting in which the unbelieving, philosophic foundation of the medieval belief in revelation stands out most clearly.

As far as the "philosophy of religion" of the medieval Jewish rationalists is concerned, then, according to Guttmann's presentation it has at least as much right to be called "rationalist" as the "philosophy of religion" of modern "rationalism with belief in revelation." It is not only that these medieval thinkers confirm the reality of the revelation through what is intended to be a rigorously historical proof, so that for them "the belief in revelation has the certainty of natural knowledge" (74); but also and above all, they deny that there is in the content of revelation anything transcending the sphere of reason. According to Saadia, who was "followed by the majority of later Jewish philosophers of religion," the content of the divine revela-

tion is "identical with that of reason. This has more than the merely negative meaning that there can be no contradiction between the two; it means positively that reason, in and of itself, is capable of coming to know the content of the revealed truth. This holds for both the theoretical and the moral content of the revelation equally" (71f., cf. also 177). Hence if reason in and of itself can come to know all theoretical and practical truths, then in fact it becomes "inevitable" that we raise the question, "what is the end of the revelation of truths to which reason can attain on its own?" The classical answer to this question runs: The revelation has a "pedagogical" end. "First, the revelation aims to make the truth generally accessible and to disclose it even to those who are not capable of thinking for themselves. Then, it aims to safeguard the philosophers from the vicissitudes and uncertainties of thought and to put into their hands from the outset the certain truth, to which their own thought can only gradually struggle through." This conception of the end of revelation and of the relation between revelation and reason reigned for centuries: "Indeed the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, insofar as it maintains the belief in the revelation, conceives the relation between reason and revelation in fundamentally the same way" (172).

However fundamental the agreement between medieval and modern "rationalism with belief in revelation" may be, there is a no less fundamental difference between the two. "The rational religion of the Middle Ages differs from the natural religion of the Enlightenment . . . in that its sole support is philosophic knowledge" (R29). That is, while for the modern Enlightenment the truths of revelation are at the same time truths of the "sound human intellect," and are therefore accessible to every man without further ado, according to the doctrine of the medieval rationalists it is only the philosophers, and they only after strenuous, lengthy preparations, who can come to know the truths of the revelation by their own powers. Thus, while according to the doctrine of the modern Enlightenment rev-

elation actually has nothing to reveal, and hence this Enlightenment's belief in revelation deserves the annihilating, contemptuous criticism levelled at it by Lessing,[13] medieval "rationalism with belief in revelation," at least at first sight, is not similarly open to criticism and contempt.

According to the doctrine of medieval rationalism, then, the revelation has an intelligible "pedagogical" end. It fulfills this end also and especially in the philosopher. It presents to him, so to speak, the precepts whose demonstration reason, stimulated by the communication of the precepts, achieves independently. In order to fulfill this end, however, the revelation would have to present those precepts unambiguously. But there can be no question of that; for it is reason that decides in the first place what the teaching of the revelation actually is, since reason alone can interpret the revelation (72). In this way then the value of the revelation for philosophy becomes questionable. In any case, the revelation is indispensable only for the multitude, who are incapable of coming to know even the few truths necessary to them, which are, after all, communicated by the literal meaning of the revelation. Besides this popular pegagogical end, the revelation also has the further but just as philosophically irrelevant function of supplying the rational "commandments of morality" with "norms of right of a purely technical kind" (81). So Guttmann.

We must confess that "rationalism with belief in revelation," when understood in this way, seems to us not only objectively untenable—as it is even in Guttmann's view (v. esp. 218 f.)—but, above all, unintelligible in itself. We grant that, even if someone believes that the revelation tells the philosopher nothing that he cannot tell himself, he can still "believe" in the revelation, that is, take cognizance that there exists a document of revelation and that all insights independently acquired by him are present, though more or less disguised, in this document. But since he could not *re*-discover them in this document if he had not already *first* discovered them in the course of his own reflection,

what *interest* then does he have in the revelation? To be sure, the multitude is dependent on the guidance of the revelation—but what concern is the multitude to the philosophers, and especially to the proud Islamic and Jewish Aristotelians of the Middle Ages? Thus the completely unintelligible, shockingly unintelligible thing about this "rationalism with belief in revelation" is that it "believes" in the revelation as a proven historical fact without being driven to it by a serious interest, a passionate dependence. The fact of the revelation, so understood, is a *factum brutum,* which, like all *facta bruta,* may be "interesting" to inquisitive hunters after facts and causes, but for that very reason has nothing to do with the philosophers. Whoever "believes" in the revelation in this manner actually, as Lessing puts it, keeps only the names and repudiates the things.

There can be an *interest* in the revelation only if there is a *need* for the revelation. The philosopher needs the revelation if he knows that his capacity for knowledge is in principle *inadequate* to know *the* truth. The conviction of the inadequacy of the human intellect to knowledge of *the* truth, that is, of the decisively important truth, is the condition of the possibility that a philosopher as philosopher may have an interest in the revelation. Maimonides, the classic author of medieval Jewish rationalism, is filled with this conviction. The decisively important doctrine, the doctrine on whose truth the possibility of being a Jew depends absolutely, that is, the doctrine of the createdness of the world, is, according to his explicit and emphatic statement, *not* demonstrable. Science to be sure can (and this is already a great deal!) refute the arguments of the unbelieving philosophers for the eternity of the world; beyond this, it can even show the probability of the creation of the world; but it cannot demonstrate it; hence it must finally leave the question unanswered and accept the answer offered by revelation.[14] Philosophy is in this way undoubtedly dependent on revelation. Maimonides is not content to state this dependence; he strives for a fundamental under-

standing of it. According to Maimonides's teaching, man can know only the "lower world," the world below the heaven, the world that surrounds him, that lies before his eyes and is familiar to him, to which he belongs—man can know only *his* world. His knowledge of the "upper world", of the heaven, of that which is "above nature," his knowledge of "God and the angels," remains necessarily fragmentary and dubious. The "lower world" is the world of becoming and passing away; the ground of all becoming and passing away is matter; matter, our limitation by it and our dependence on it, is the ground of our being able to fulfill only inadequately our highest and proper destiny, the knowledge of "God and the angels." The highest objects of knowledge are secrets from us; only occasionally does the truth shine on us, so that we suppose it is day; but it is at once withdrawn again from our view because of matter and our matter-bound life. We live in a deep dark night, only occasionally illumined by flashes of lightning. Since therefore man's intellect has a limit necessarily given with human nature, which it cannot cross, man is obliged for the glory of his Lord to halt at this limit and to subject himself to the revealed doctrines that he cannot comprehend and demonstrate.[15] But revelation is imparted to man exclusively by prophets, that is, by men who have at their disposal a direct knowledge of the "upper world" essentially inaccessible to the philosopher.[16] Thus, even and especially the philosopher needs the guidance of the revelation.

If one understands Maimonides's "rationalism with belief in revelation" in the manner sketched here, it becomes not only intelligible in itself but, what is more, immune to the criticism that Guttmann advances against it in order to motivate the transition from the medieval position to the fundamental modern distinction between theoretical and religious truth-consciousness. In Guttmann's view, medieval "rationalism with belief in revelation" necessarily leads to the appeal to the doctrine of the twofold truth, in which doctrine there emerges for the first time the problem of how the autonomy of the religious consciousness over

against the scientific consciousness, and vice versa, are to be "preserved and at the same time joined into the unity of a single truth-consciousness." For

> if metaphysical knowledge and the authority of the revelation are set up beside one another as courts of truth with equally absolute jurisdiction, then when they have differences, there is no possibility of an agreement in principle, and there remains only the path of reciprocal accommodation from case to case. Protest against this procedure of accommodation with its artificialities and violences is the inner motive of the notion of the double truth (218 f. and R15).

We would hold that precisely the "agreement *in principle*" that Guttmann finds lacking was in fact achieved by Maimonides. By this we do not mean that his "accommodations" of revelation and reason were necessarily satisfactory in each individual case, that one would not have to raise doubts perhaps especially about the interpretation of the Bible in accordance with Aristotelian cosmology and the like, as made possible by allegorization. The agreement suggested by Maimonides is in any case an agreement in principle insofar as it determines the *court* that must settle the conflict between reason and revelation. This court—and this is self-evident for a rationalist—is reason: Maimonides *demonstrates* that reason has a limit and must therefore accept the suprarational doctrines of revelation without being able to understand or demonstrate them. Maimonides' rational critique of reason shows that philosophy knows, strictly speaking, only the "lower world" and that, starting from this, it can demonstrate the existence, unity and incorporeality of God. Contemplative knowledge of the "upper world" is possible only for the prophets and thus is denied to the philosophers. Hence it is only through the prophets that the truth transcending philosophy becomes known to the philosophers, as to all men—the truth that the world is not eternal but created; and this truth has in principle the feature that it is absolutely necessary for

life: for on the truth of the doctrine of creation there depends not, to be sure, the possibility of revelation in general, but certainly the truth and the possible absoluteness of the one particular revelation.[17] Thus all the truth necessary for his life is wholly accessible to man through reason *and* revelation: through reason *his* world becomes known, in itself and in relation to the "upper world" that is inaccessible to him, while through revelation he comes to know those truths transcending rational knowledge that he needs for his life. Now the revelation, to be sure, communicates not only those truths necessary for life that are suprarational, but *all* truths necessary for life that are not self-evident and hence known to every man without further ado. Thus the revelation teaches, for example and preeminently, the existence, unity and incorporeality of God just as much as it teaches the createdness of the world. This is necessary because even when un-self-evident truths necessary for life are accessible to reason in principle, they actually become accessible to reason only after strenuous, lengthy preparations, while meanwhile every man needs these truths at all times.[18] Since, then, the revelation (or at least the literal sense of the revelation) is addressed to all men and not specifically to the philosophers, and since on the other hand the man suited to philosophizing, and only he, is authorized and even obligated by the revelation to gain the knowledge of the human world that is in principle accessible to human reason,—the philosopher, with the privilege of his special obligation, need not and cannot let himself be guided and bound by the (literal sense of the) revelation in the fulfillment of his severely circumscribed duty, for the revelation (at least in its literal sense) has nothing to say to the philosopher about things whose knowledge he can attain for himself and whose knowledge is not necessary to life for all men.

However one may regard this agreement of reason and revelation proposed by Maimonides, at any rate Maimonides undoubtedly establishes an essential excess of revealed truth over rational truth. On this point at least there is

complete agreement between Maimonides and Judah Halevi (cf. 140), that is, between the two leading spirits of medieval Jewish philosophy. Hence Guttmann's assertion that the identity of the revealed truth with the rational truth is the prevailing doctrine in medieval Jewish philosophy does not accord with the facts. The particular circumstance that Saadia teaches the identity of revealed truth and rational truth—granting that he actually does so—can confidently be disregarded, in a summary view of medieval Jewish philosophy, on the same grounds and with the same justice with which Guttmann omits Saadia in his summary comparison of medieval and modern philosophy;[19] for Saadia, who lived before the real development of philosophy, *cannot* have had so clear an idea as the men who had to come to terms with Aristotelianism of the difficulties involved in coming to know the teachings of revelation through reason alone. And as for the later rationalists, we recall the judgment of Ibn Daud about that part of the revealed law that is not knowable by reason, that just *because* it is not accessible to reason, it has the advantage of making complete obedience to God possible for man. But if the realization of this highest virtue—the virtue established by the example of Abraham in the binding of his son[20]—is wholly dependent on the existence of revealed commandments inaccessible to thought, then there can be no question of the sufficiency of reason. And finally we recall Gersonides, who is "perhaps the most authentic Aristotelian produced by the Jewish Middle Ages" (237), who expressly opposed Maimonides's view of the insufficiency of human reason with the view that human reason is sufficient to answer all questions for whose answer man has a natural longing, and in whose view nevertheless the Torah, as the work of infinite wisdom, is accessible to finite reason only to a very limited extent: certainly, reason, and only reason, holds the key to the Torah, but the Torah is a whole *world,* an analogue to the creation, full of secrets and riddles, and it is no less so for the fact that its basic doctrines—and especially the doc-

trine of the creation—can with great difficulty be known by the unassisted reason of man.[21]

Now admittedly these observations, which merely limit the field of application, so to speak, of Guttmann's view of "rationalism with belief in revelation," only postpone the fundamental question of the inner possibility of a "rationalism with belief in revelation" that asserts, as in Guttmann's presentation, the complete coincidence of revealed and rational truth. For as with all fundamental questions, here too *one* case must stand for thousands. And Guttmann can name more than one medieval philosopher who asserts the "identity of revealed and rational truth." And to be sure not only philosophers like Saadia, about whom one can raise the objection mentioned above, but also no lesser ones than *the* "philosophers," that is, the Islamic Aristotelians from Alfarabi to Averroes. In view of the authoritative influence these philosophers exerted precisely during the flowering of medieval Jewish philosophy and particularly on the "philosophy of religion" of the Jewish Middle Ages, we would have to recur, even if not a single important Jewish philosopher had taught the "identity of revealed truth and rational truth," to the question: how is this kind of "rationalism with belief in revelation" intelligible at all? On the basis of Guttmann's presentation it was unintelligible because it did not emerge from that presentation what *interest* the "rationalists with belief in revelation" had in the revelation. We turn therefore to these philosophers themselves with the question what, in their view, really is the meaning and end of the revelation. In so doing, we are following Guttmann's own reminder, which reads, "In fact one must always remain aware that a transposition of ideas is involved whenever we put the medieval doctrines of the end or object of *revelation* under the aspect of the concept of *religion,* and it does not lose this character even when the end of revelation is identified with that of reason" (R46). Since, then, an essential modification of the historical evidence results from the very use of the concept of "religion"

and from the supposition that the medieval philosophers taught a "philosophy of religion," we must ask first of all: in the view of these philosophers, to what philosophical discipline does the elucidation of the meaning and end of revelation belong?

V

The revelation as the law given by God through a prophet becomes a theme of philosophy in the doctrine of prophecy.[22] It is of course psychology that treats of the natural conditions of prophecy, the faculties of the soul whose highest peak is the prophetic capacities. But psychology is not concerned with prophecy as such, as is shown already by the fact that this science deals with the prophetic faculties only incidentally, not systematically; and in particular, psychology gives no information about the meaning and end of prophecy. This specific problem of prophecy is a subject matter of *politics*. But since politics stands in the last place in the system of the sciences, this answers the question of the position occupied by the philosophic foundation of the law in the system of medieval philosophy. It stands not at the beginning and not at the center, but it is the end and conclusion, or if you like, the crown and seal of metaphysics.

But politics proceeds in the following manner. It begins from the fact that man is by nature a political living being, and it shows that the human race is in need of laws and therefore of a lawgiver. Now there are two kinds of laws, and thus also of lawgivers: first, there are laws having no other task than to make it possible to live together peacefully, and *therefore* directed only towards the welfare of the body; second, there are laws having as their end not only the welfare of the body but also the welfare, the perfection, of the soul. Laws of the first kind are human laws. On the other hand, a law having as its end the perfection of the soul, or more exactly the perfection of the intellect, and striving for the well-being of the body only for the sake of

this specific perfection of man and in order to attain it—is a *divine* law, whose proclaimer can only be a *prophet.* But the prophet could not give the right guidance for the perfection of the intellect, in other words, he could not summon and educate to philosophizing the men who are suited to it, if he himself were not a philosopher. The prophet must therefore be *also* a philosopher. And of course, if the law he gives is to be binding on all philosophers, he must be in full possession of philosophic insight. But he must be not *only* a philosopher, for a philosopher as such is not suited to be a lawgiver, because the art of lawgiving assumes a perfection of the *imaginative faculty,* which for the philosophers is not only not characteristic and not necessary, but is even an impediment. The prophet is thus teacher and ruler, philosopher and legislator *in one.* And since he could not be a ruler without the capability of knowing the future and performing miracles, he is philosopher/legislator/seer/miracle-worker in one.

Now it is clear why the philosopher, even if he can come to know on his own all the truths communicated by the prophets, is nonetheless *dependent* on revelation, has an *interest* in revelation. The philosopher is dependent on revelation as surely as he is a *human being,* for as a human being he is a political being and thus is in need of a law, and as a rational man he must be primarily concerned with living under a rational law, that is, a law directed to the perfection proper to man. But the philosopher cannot give this law either to himself or to others; for while he can indeed, *qua* philosopher, *know* the principles of a law in general and the principles of the rational law in particular, he can never *divine* the concrete individual ordinances of the ideal law, whose precise stipulation is the only way the law can become effectual, or simply, can become—law. The philosopher has therefore an interest in revelation, since he is essentially a man and man is essentially a political being.

It would be presumptuous of us to claim to instruct such an expert as Guttmann about facts that are obviously

familiar to him (v. esp. 262 and note 368).[23] We venture to quarrel with him only about their significance, which in our opinion he underestimates by not putting these facts in central place. The fact that he proceeds in this way is not accidental, but follows necessarily from his premise. To be sure, because he is convinced not of *the* but only of *a certain* superiority of modern over medieval philosophy, he does not see himself compelled to a radical critique of the fundamental modern concepts and questions. Thus it comes about that, while in fact acknowledging the Jewish tradition as the judge of modern thought, he does not hesitate to entrust the intellectual preservation of this tradition to "philosophy of religion" as the analysis of the religious consciousness. Consequently, the problem of religious truth as the problem of the relationship between theoretical and religious truth-consciousness becomes for him the central problem of "philosophy of religion," and hence he strives to track down the origin of this question in medieval philosophy. Thus his presentation gives the impression that for the rationalists of the Middle Ages, the communication of *truths,* and not the proclamation of the *law,* is the *primary* end of the revelation. And since the truths communicated by revelation are, in the view of these rationalists, accessible also to unassisted reason, there arises the still more dubious impression that these philosophers attributed to the revelation, ultimately and in earnest, a merely popular pedagogical significance. The community-founding, *state-founding* meaning of the revelation becomes in Guttmann a secondary end.[24] Since, then, this misconstruction of the leading idea of medieval philosophy follows from Guttmann's modern formulation of the question, and since adherence to this formulation follows from the conviction that there is a certain superiority of modern over medieval philosophy, we may say that the historian of medieval philosophy would do well to assume, at least heuristically, the *unconditional* superiority of medieval philosophy over modern philosophy.

The idea of "philosophy of religion" that guides Gutt-

mann's research goes back to Schleiermacher. Through Schleiermacher it first became possible to attain a concept of "religion," a "concept of belief," more in keeping with the "subjectivity of the religious consciousness" than the medieval—that is, whether rationalistic or supernaturalistic, in any case "intellectualistic"—"concept of belief" (cf. R65 and R7). The return or retreat to "subjectivity" has as a consequence, or as a presupposition, the depreciation of everything that cannot issue essentially from "subjectivity." But in "subjectivity," in "moral consciousness," are grounded preeminently "the most general basic demands of morality," "the unwritten law" (80), the principles of human community life, *natural right,*—but not the individual stipulations through which alone those principles can become *effectual.* Hence Guttmann is being true to himself when he calls these individual stipulations—which according to the doctrine of Saadia and of a "great part of the later Jewish philosophers of religion" can be properly determined only by revelation—"norms of right of a purely technical kind," when he reproaches Saadia and his successors for not separating these "norms of right of a purely technical kind . . . from moral ordinances," and when he generally calls "primitive" the evidence adduced by those philosophers that "the most general basic demands of morality" "need to be completed through revelation." We would accept this adjective, if only in its primitive, original sense: the Islamic and Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages are "more primitive" than the modern philosophers because they are guided not, like them, by the derived idea of natural right, but by the *primary, ancient* idea of *law* as a unified, total regimen of human life; in other words, because they are pupils of *Plato* and not pupils of Christians.[25]

According to the doctrine of the Islamic Aristotelians, transplanted into Judaism particularly by Maimonides, the prophet, as philosopher and legislator in one, is the proclaimer of a law whose aim is the specific perfection of man. But every law aims at making community life possible. Hence the prophet is the founder of a community

directed towards the specific perfection of man, and is thus the founder of the ideal state. The classic model of the ideal state is the *Platonic* state. In fact, and even expressly and programatically, the Islamic Aristotelians understand the ideal state founded by the prophet under Plato's instruction. They understand the prophet as founder of the Platonic state, as Platonic philosopher-king; the prophetic legislator has fulfilled what the philosopher Plato called for but could only call for. Plato's requirement that philosophy and political rule must coincide, Plato's idea of the philosopher-king, set up the outline whose completion in the light of the actual revelation produces the concept of the prophet held by the Islamic Aristotelians and their Jewish pupils.

But if this is the case, then medieval prophetology, that is, the medieval philosophic foundation of the law and thus medieval "philosophy of religion," so far from being *the* original achievement of medieval thought, is rather nothing but a modification, or if you will, the consummation of a teaching handed down from antiquity. The transition from the philosopher-king to the prophet as philosopher-legislator is by no means a more original achievement than the transition from the Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* to the creator-God of the revelation. Now it is certainly true that in their transformation of Platonic (or Aristotelian) metaphysics in the direction of the revealed doctrine of creation the Islamic Aristotelians were, to say the least, not as certain and unequivocal as in their transformation of Platonic politics into a philosophic foundation of the revealed law. Hence it is precisely the most "radical" medieval rationalists, those who surrender in metaphysics all or almost all the characteristic doctrines of the revelation in favor of the Greek philosophic doctrines, who are indeed *relatively* at their most original in the field of "philosophy of religion"—that is, insofar as they do at any rate give, in their philosophic foundation of the law, a new answer—though admittedly a new answer to the old, the ancient question about the ideal state and its possibility.

But as previously shown, the philosophic foundation of the law, in spite of outward appearances, is not *a* teaching among others but is the place in the system of the Islamic Aristotelians and their Jewish pupils where the presupposition of their philosophizing comes under discussion. Now if they are following Plato in the philosophic foundation of the law, this means that these philosophers are Platonists not because they accept this or that Platonic theorem, however important—in this sense they are Aristotelians rather than Platonists—but because, in the foundation of philosophizing itself, they are guided by Plato to answer a Platonic question within a framework laid out by Plato. Ultimately they differ from Plato only in this, though decisively in this: for them the founder of the ideal state is not a possible philosopher-king to be awaited in the future, but an actual prophet who existed in the past. That is, they modify Plato's answer in the light of the revelation that has now actually occurred. It is on this basis that one must answer the question that we previously identified as the central difficulty in the interpretation of medieval Islamic and Jewish rationalism, the question, that is, why the philosophic foundation of the law, which is in fact the philosophic discussion of the presupposition of philosophizing itself, is for these medieval philosophers only one theme among others, and even the last theme of their philosophy. This specific disproportion arises from the fact that the ideal law, since it is *given* through revelation, no longer needs to be *sought* by them, as by Plato, but needs only to be *understood* from the principles of the disciplines (metaphysics and psychology) that precede it. Since, therefore, for them the law was not truly *open* to question, their philosophy of law does not have the sharpness, originality, depth, and—ambiguity of Platonic politics. Since Plato's requirement is now *satisfied,* Plato's questioning inquiry about this requirement is *blunted.*

Through knowledge of the *essential* dependence of the Islamic Aristotelians and their Jewish pupils on Plato, the concrete possibility of a coherent and authentic interpretation of the teaching of these medieval philosophers is delin-

eated. This teaching must be understood *fundamentally* as derivative from Platonic philosophy. Thus it is not enough to trace this teaching down from Platonic philosophy on the evidence of exact source analysis. On the contrary, the *emergence* of this teaching from Platonic philosophy must be conceived in its potentiality. To this end it is necessary first of all to identify the highest perspective acknowledged in common by both Plato and the medieval philosophers. This perspective proves to be the idea of a rational law, that is, a law directed to the specific perfection of man. But such a law—and only such a law deserves the name "law"—can only be of divine origin.[26] The idea of the *divine law* is the required highest perspective. Hence the interpretation of Platonic philosophy, which is the indispensable presupposition of a radical interpretation of medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophy, has to begin not from the *Republic* but from the *Laws*. It is in the *Laws* that Plato undoubtedly stands closest to the world of the revealed law, since it is there that, in accordance with a kind of interpretation anticipating the philosophic interpretation of the revealed law among the medieval thinkers, Plato transforms the "divine laws" of Greek antiquity into truly divine laws, or recognizes them as truly divine laws. In this approximation to the revelation without the guidance of the revelation we grasp at its origin the unbelieving, philosophic foundation of the belief in the revelation. Plato's approximation to the revelation furnishes the medieval thinkers with the *starting-point* from which they could understand the revelation philosophically. But if they were not to lose confidence in the revelation because of Plato, then it had to be the case that Platonic philosophy had suffered from an *aporia* in principle that had been remedied only by the revelation. The radical interpretation of the doctrine of the Islamic Aristotelians and their Jewish pupils presupposes, therefore, an interpretation of Plato's *Laws* attentive to the fact that the *Laws point to* the revelation, but *only* point to it. The next step is to investigate the modifications of Platonic politics in the Hellenistic Age, for it is in this age that the

concept of the philosopher-king is transformed into the concept of the prophet. Only when the prophetology of the Islamic Aristotelians is understood in this way—and as it appears, the history of this prophetology, even before Alfarabi, is not exactly a short one—can one interpret Maimonides's prophetology, which is on the whole the most fully elaborated form of medieval prophetology. With regard to the latter it must particularly be explained why the political orientation, though glimmering everywhere in it, does not become explicit as it does in the prophetology of the Islamic Aristotelians. This may result from the fact that for Maimonides, in contrast to his Islamic teachers, the revelation has also the function of imparting teachings that cannot be adequately guaranteed by reason. In this regard the prophetology of Gersonides holds special interest. It is the true crux of the interpretation. For Gersonides neither acknowledges truths that are suprarational in principle, that could be guaranteed only by the revelation, nor does he ascribe to prophecy an essentially political meaning; according to his teaching, the function of prophecy is primarily mantic. Thus it is only in the case of Gersonides that we have to do with a "rationalism with belief in revelation" which, without having any interest in the revelation, nevertheless believes in the revelation and makes the revelation, like all other facts, a subject of philosophic inquiry. But precisely in Gersonides one can see how this "rationalism with belief in revelation" became possible only through the decay of Platonism. Gersonides explicitly argues that human provision for the stability of the human associations, which Plato considered necessary, is essentially dispensable, because this stability is adequately guaranteed by Providence. Plato's ideal state does not need to be established by men, not to say prophets—the Providentially ruled world, including the human world, is already the ideal state.[27] While Providence is, according to the teaching of the Islamic Aristotelians and Maimonides, the condition for the fact that the desideratum of prophetic legislation and state-founding is necessarily fulfilled, in Gersonides'

view it does not even admit of this desideratum. While for Plato the question of the law, and particularly the need of human provision for human beings, results from the absence of divine provision (*Politicus* 274d), and accordingly the realization of the ideal state depends on chance (*Rep.* 499b and *Laws* 710c–d); while for the medieval predecessors of Gersonides the ideal state, as a result of the foundation of the belief in revelation on the belief in Providence, loses "only" its questionableness; as a consequence of Gersonides' "radicalizing" of the idea of Providence, the ideal state loses its meaning altogether. Thus not only does Gersonides approach "modern deism" (228)—he thereby even approaches, remarkably, that kind of modern politics which believes, first explicitly and later implicitly, on the basis of an apparently radicalized but actually abstract belief in Providence that ignores the power of evil, that it can limit the operation of the state within the narrowest boundaries. From this point, finally, Mendelssohn's teaching on revelation can be illuminated in all its questionableness, attempting as it does, despite the "radicalizing" of the belief in Providence and despite even the surrender of the traditional natural right of duty in favor of the modern natural right of claim,[28] to restore the Platonic/medieval ideas of law.

The necessary connection between politics and theology (metaphysics), on which we have stumbled as if by accident, vouches for the fact that the interpretation of medieval Jewish philosophy beginning from Platonic politics (and not from the *Timaeus* or from Aristotelian metaphysics) does not have to lose sight of the metaphysical problems that stand in the foreground for the medieval philosophers themselves. And this procedure, so far from resulting in the underestimation of these problems, actually offers the only guarantee of understanding their proper, that is their human, meaning. If, on the other hand, one begins from the metaphysical problems, one misses, as the history of the inquiry to date clearly shows, the political problem, in which is concealed nothing less than the foun-

dation of philosophy, the philosophic elucidation of the presupposition of philosophizing. It is Guttmann's great merit to have indicated, through his emphasis on the "religio-philosophic" character of medieval philosophy, the deeper presuppositions of medieval metaphysics; Guttmann's true intention, which betrays itself most clearly in his vigorous engagement with medieval philosophy, will have to remain for future scholarship to assist to victory through critical dissection of the *modern* concept of "religious consciousness," through a restored understanding of the *ancient,* Platonic concept of divine law. And in this way, ultimately, justice will be done to Hermann Cohen's profound surmise that Maimonides was "in deeper harmony with Plato than with Aristotle."[29]

CHAPTER 2

The Legal Foundation of Philosophy: The Commandment to Philosophize and the Freedom of Philosophizing

The men whose teachings offer the readiest access to the philosophic and hence unbelieving basis of medieval Jewish (and Islamic) philosophy, the medieval rationalists, developed in greater or lesser detail and coherence a legal foundation of philosophy, that is, a defense of philosophizing before the bar of revelation. This fact—even if it happens that one rationalist or another did not intend the legal foundation of philosophy straightforwardly, but wrote only to allay the suspicions *of others*—is already sufficient proof that the reality of the revelation, of the revealed law, is the decisive pre-philosophic premise of these philosophers. Even if, after assuring themselves of the permittedness or commandedness of philosophizing as such, they can explain the possibility of the revelation philosophically, and can ultimately regard reason as sole judge of the truth or falsehood of revelation, nevertheless, *before* all endeavors and convictions of this kind, before *all* philosophizing, the fact of the revelation stands firm. It makes no difference whether this fact is acknowledged on the basis of a direct insight into the superhuman origin of the document of revelation or on the basis of an indirect, historical proof; because both the direct insight and the proof are independent of all specifically philosophic consideration, and particularly of all reflection on the necessary conditions of revelation, they

are in fact prior to the legal foundation of philosophy and thus prior to philosophizing itself.

On this pre-philosophic premise of the fact of the revelation, and *only* on it, but necessarily on it, there arises the need for a legal foundation of philosophy. For at first the revealed law makes philosophizing questionable from the ground up. A God-given and therefore perfect law necessarily suffices to guide life to its true goal. What then is the sense of philosophizing? Does it not necessarily lose its seriousness? Or if it retains this, does it not necessarily lead away from the *one* duty and task of man, of the Jew? What has the Jew to do with Plato or Aristotle, that he should keep watch at their door to learn wisdom from them? Are not the works of these philosophers profane books, which seduce the heart with fictitious views and erroneous opinions?[1] To put it in basic terms, is philosophizing forbidden or permitted or actually commanded?

In what follows, we will consider how Averroes, Maimonides and Gersonides answered this question. We begin with Averroes, since he treats the legal foundation of philosophy thematically in a treatise devoted specifically to this end, the *Decisive Treatise* (Facl-ul-maqal).[2] Our primary interest is in Maimonides, the "classic of rationalism" in Judaism. In order to understand better the "moderate" rationalism of Maimonides, one must look ahead to the far more "radical" view developed by Gersonides in an explicit polemic against Maimonides. One can see more sharply in the "radical" teaching of Gersonides than in the "moderate" teaching of Maimonides what is meant by "rationalism" in medieval Judaism.

A. Averroes

The purpose of the *Decisive Treatise* is to "determine the connection that exists between the law and philosophy." The inquiry has expressly the character of *legal* speculation (I, 7). It asks whether speculation about philosophy and the sciences of logic is *permitted or forbidden or commanded by*

the law (I, 8). The distinction of these categories, in the form in which Averroes uses it, is itself drawn from (Islamic) law; it is of fundamental importance in this law; it and the question it defines has a fundamental application to all human affairs.[3] Thus philosophy has in the first place no priority at all over any other human activity. Like every other human activity, it is under the law, it must justify itself before the law.

By philosophy is understood the consideration of the beings in their relation to their maker (I, 10). Philosophy thus understood, whose organ is reason, is however made a *duty* by the law, as countless Qur'an verses undoubtedly attest (1, 14-2, 9). From this stems the *duty* to engage in the study of logic, whose objects—the kinds and conditions of rational judgment—are to speculation as the instruments are to the work (2, 13-3, 1). Hence, in case others have already elaborated logic earlier, there arises for their successors the further *duty* of seeking help from their predecessors, whether these are co-religionists or not: "for with regard to the instrument used for sacrifice, one considers what concerns the validity of the sacrifice made with it, and not whether it belongs to one of our co-religionists or one who is not our co-religionist, since the instrument itself contains in itself the conditions of that validity" (3, 12-4, 5). Thus the study of Aristotelian logic is derived as a duty imposed by the law. In the same way it is established that it is a legal *duty* to study the philosophic books of the predecessors, that is, those books that have as their subject that-which-is in its relation to its maker (4, 11-5, 12); thus the study of Aristotelian physics and metaphysics is also a *duty*.

Philosophy stands *under the law,* but in such a way that it is *commanded* by the law. And indeed it is not merely commanded as one among many human activities, but rather its proper end is identical with the end of the law. Characteristically, the foundation of this far more extensive claim does not emerge clearly in Averroes's discussion; his concern is primarily with a legal, that is, casuistic inquiry. The foundation of the more extensive claim, which attracts

attention at various places in the casuistic inquiry, goes as follows: It is the *end of the law* to summon men to *happiness;* happiness consists in the *knowledge of God;* but one can know God only from the beings, for these, as being made, point to God as their maker; but the consideration of the beings as pointing to their maker—this and nothing else is to philosophize; thus the end of philosophy is identical with the end of the law; hence it would be the height of folly and of removal from God—and not merely *one* culpable deed among many—to prevent from philosophizing one who is suited to philosophizing (1, 9–13; 4, 8–9; 5, 12–18; 6, 15–16; 18, 19–21; 23, 7 ff.).

Now it is all one whether the commandment to philosophize is *one* commandment among many or *the* commandment. In either case, philosophizing is commanded by the law.

> Now since these (viz. the religious) laws are truth and since they summon to speculation, which leads to knowledge of the truth, we Muslims know positively that speculation proceeding by means of demonstration does not lead to the contrary of what is revealed in the law; for truth does not disagree with truth, but is in harmony with it and testifies to it (7, 6–9).

Philosophy and the law cannot conflict with one another since they are both truth and both go back to the source of truth, to God, the giver of the law and the creator of reason. But one must now observe that while this consideration certainly excludes *a priori* all conflict between philosophy and the law, it still does not establish the *right* of philosophizing. The right of philosophizing is established only by the express commandment of the law ("since these laws . . . summon to inquiry . . ."). The creation of reason is one thing; its use and authorization is another.

Reason as authorized by the law to philosophize, philosophy as commanded by the law, cannot, precisely for this reason, come into conflict with the law. Now if philosophy

leads to any kind of knowledge of any thing, and the law speaks of this thing differently from philosophy, then the text of the law is in need of *interpretation;* that is, this text is not to be understood literally, but must be understood figuratively (7, 9–18). It *must* be understood figuratively: interpretation too is a *duty;* only, to be sure, for the "men of demonstration," the men suited to philosophizing; for all others it is *forbidden;* hence the men of demonstration are *commanded* to keep the interpretation secret from other men. Whoever, philosopher or non-philosopher, transgresses this commandment or prohibition, makes himself guilty of *unbelief* (disavowal) or at least of *heresy* (innovation) (16, 3–4; 17, 11–18; 20, 14; 21, 8–9; 23, 1–3). Thus those suited to philosophizing are commanded: (1) to philosophize; (2) in case of a conflict between philosophy and the literal sense of the law, to interpret the law; and (3) to keep the interpretation secret from all the unqualified.

Is philosophy as authorized by the law *free?* Can philosophy, *without concern for the law,* teach everything that it establishes for itself? Is it *without need* of guidance by the law? That philosophy as authorized by the law is free with respect to that law is proved in the right of interpretation. Does this right hold without any restrictions? Averroes gives five restrictions, which we wish to examine one by one for their import.

> (1) Interpretation must not go against Arabic linguistic usage; it must be in accordance with the rules of art (7, 16–18). By this restriction the freedom of philosophizing is not prejudiced. To see this one need only consider that if a passage of the law that conflicts with reason cannot be interpreted according to the rules of art, it can always be understood as intended merely rhetorically, and thus as valid only for the multitude: The interpretation of the law as a whole makes the "interpretation" of single passages superfluous in certain circumstances. How little this restriction limits interpreta-

tion is shown, for example, by the interpretation of the Qur'an verse "Call to the way of thy Lord by means of wisdom and beautiful admonition, and quarrel with them by means of what is most beautiful" [16.125]. This verse clearly alludes to the three methods of persuasion: "wisdom" to demonstrative argument; "beautiful admonition" to rhetorical argument; and "quarrel" to dialectical argument (7, 4–6).

(2) If the literal meaning of the law contradicts the outcome of demonstration, and must therefore be interpreted, then one will always find in a thorough examination of the law a passage which in its literal meaning "attests this interpretation or approaches its attestation" (8, 4–6). When one considers that there is hardly a philosophic teaching of which it cannot be said that there are Scriptural passages that "attest" it "or approach its attestation," then one sees that this second restriction, too, is in truth no restriction.

(3) Passages which, according to the true consensus of the Muslims, are to be understood literally, must not be interpreted. About this Averroes himself says that in speculative matters a true consensus can never be confirmed, and cannot be confirmed for the very reason that, according to a view widespread in the early period of Islam, the "inner" (the inner sense that diverges from the literal sense) must not be openly imparted (8, 14–9, 17).

(4) Teachings known through all three kinds of argument—demonstrative, dialectical and rhetorical argument—must not be interpreted (15, 16–18; 20). Here it is not even formally a matter of a restriction on the right of interpretation. For if the possibility and necessity of interpreting a passage of the law arises only when this passage conflicts with the outcome of demonstration, then it is clear that

there is no occasion to interpret a passage whose literal sense is confirmed *also* by demonstration.[4]

(5) Interpretation must not lead to the disavowal of the *existence* of the things belonging to the principles of the law; only with regard to the *quality* of these things is interpretation possible (e.g., the existence of the future life is not to be denied, although one may be of a different opinion about its quality from the literal sense of the Qur'an) (17, 7–9). But these principles of the law are accessible also and especially to philosophic knowledge.[5] Thus there is no reason for the philosophers to interpret the Qur'an-passages that treat of them.

Thus in every case of a contradiction between philosophy and the law, the philosopher may interpret the literal sense of the law and is not bound by this literal sense; in this sense, philosophy is *free*. But this freedom would prove dubious if "the error that befalls the learned men when they speculate about the difficult things about which the law has charged them to speculate" were a sin. So Averroes also maintains that errors of this kind are excusable, that not only the one qualified for philosophy who recognizes the truth, but also the one qualified for philosophy who errs in the course of his philosophizing, earns God's reward (13, 17-14, 5). To be sure, he goes this far only in connection with the discussion of a question whose answer he considers irrelevant to dogma.[6] His basic teaching is, "In general, error in regard to the law is of two kinds: either it is an error for which he is excused who is worthy of speculating about that in which the error occurs, or it is an error for which no one is excused, which rather, if it occurs in the principles of the law, is disavowal, and, if it occurs in the derived teachings, is innovation" (14, 12–17). Hence in this sense, philosophy is *bound*. One may at first be in doubt whether this bondage differs from the bondage given with the very intention of philosophy, the bondage to known

truth; for since the "principles of the law" concern truths that are accessible to philosophy itself, philosophy itself qualifies the deviation from those principles as error. Nevertheless philosophy does not provide the qualification, decisive here because it is decisive about excusability and inexcusability, of error with respect to those principles as "disavowal" (unbelief). This qualification is derived from the law. Because it binds philosophy, philosophy is thereby bound by an extra-philosophic, pre-philosophic tribunal. Expressed differently: for Averroes there are *dogmas;* to be sure, these dogmas are accessible to the unaided reason of man and thus are not "dogmas" in the sense of supernatural truths; but the acknowledgment or denial of these rational truths has altogether the character and the consequences of the acknowledgment or denial of a dogma. If one takes offense at the word "dogmas," one must at least say that for Averroes there are *truths prescribed by the law.* Thus philosophy as authorized by the law is not free in the sense that one simply cannot say at the outset what it will teach; it is not as if it goes its way altogether unguided, so as to establish unexpectedly in the end that the result it has led to was also given previously by the law. Its results are, rather, known from the outset precisely through the law, and error with regard to these results is declared to it from the outset to be unforgivable. This bondage of philosophy is already expressed in its definition: it is nothing other than knowledge of *God* derived from the creation. In the end, philosophy does no more than to deepen and demonstrate the knowledge accessible to *all* Muslims through the law.

Philosophy owes its authorization, its freedom, to the law; *its freedom depends upon its bondage.* Philosophy is not sovereign. The beginning of philosophy is not the beginning simply; the law has the first place. The literal sense of the law may be abandoned only if the opposite is *proven;* it is not that one occupies *from the outset* a standpoint outside the law, from which one proceeds by the path of rational reflection to submission to the law. Under these circumstances there is the possibility that the law teaches various

things which are not accessible to philosophy, and which *therefore* cannot and should not be interpreted. In fact in two works of Averroes, the *Tahafut al-Tahafut* and the *Manahig,* there are a number of passages where he speaks of the content of revelation as exceeding rational knowledge, of the *superiority* of revelation over reason.[7] As to whether one can entirely trust these remarks, disagreement reigns. It was in any case creditable to point them out emphatically as long as it was a matter of making it clear that Averroes was not somehow the Voltaire of the twelfth century. But even for demonstrating this, those remarks were not really indispensable; for this is already demonstrated by the fact that Averroes undoubtedly acknowledges the primacy of the law. But once this primacy is established, only a secondary importance attaches in any case to the question whether philosophy as authorized by the law can, by its own power, know completely or only partially the truths taught by the law, and thus to the quarrel about the previously-mentioned "believing" expressions of Averroes.[8]

B. Maimonides

Since the legal foundation of philosophy is not the theme of the *Guide,* one will not find in this book so coherent a discussion of it as is presented in Averroes's *Decisive Treatise.* Hence one must collect the pertinent statements of Maimonides from the various parts of his work.[9]

The law summons to belief in the most important truths (God's existence, unity, etc.). Belief, though, is not just lip-service, but understanding of what is believed; belief is perfect only if a man has seen that the opposite of what is believed is in no way possible. Hence the law summons to the understanding and to the demonstration of the truths that it imparts. Therewith it implicitly commands knowledge of the world; for God can be known only from His works. Of course the law has not imparted this knowledge explicitly, but insofar as it commands one to love God and to fear God, it commands knowledge of the world as *the*

way to the love of God and the fear of God. The acquisition of the truths prescribed by the law presupposes various preliminary studies: mathematics, logic, and physics.[10]

Scripture and tradition show that as God's activity in general is perfect, so also is the law given by Him. This law—the law as a whole and each individual commandment—necessarily has a reason, a rational end. Divine law differs from human laws in that it serves the highest end, the specific perfection of man; the specific perfection of man is knowledge, the knowledge of God.[11] Thus the end of the law is identical with the end of philosophy.

If philosophy as authorized by the law leads to a result that conflicts with the literal sense of the law, if the literal sense is *therefore* impossible, then we must interpret the literal sense, that is, treat it as figuratively meant.[12] To be interpreted are preeminently all scriptural passages that attribute corporeality and mutability to God. In this case it is a duty to convey to the multitude, too, that the passages in question must not be understood literally: no man must be left to believe in the corporeality of God, just as no man must be left to believe in the nonexistence of God or in the existence of other gods.[13] But of the other subjects of metaphysics, of the "secrets of the Torah," one may impart only the elements, and then only to suitable persons. The multitude must be prevented from occupation with these subjects: it is *legally prohibited* to teach them openly.[14]

Maimonides is thus in agreement with Averroes that the law commands: (1) to philosophize; (2) in case of a conflict between philosophy and the literal sense of the law, to interpret the literal sense; and (3) to keep the interpretation secret from all the unqualified.[15] Thus to Maimonides, as previously to Averroes, the question must be posed: does the right of interpretation hold without any restriction? The question has been sharpened: is the revelation (the law) superior to reason in such a way that revelation conveys truths that reason cannot contradict because these truths are not accessible to reason? The answer of Maimonides is beyond doubt: human intellect has a limit which it

cannot cross; for this reason man is obliged, for the glory of his Lord, to halt at this limit and not to reject the teachings of revelation that he cannot comprehend and demonstrate.[16] Philosophy is free—in its own sphere. Its sphere is nature, not super-nature; more precisely, the world below the heaven, not the heaven; its sphere is the world of man.[17]

It is above all in connection with his discussions of the problem of the creation that Maimonides speaks of the inferiority of human intellect in comparison with revelation. He concludes that it is impossible for man to reach by way of science the answer to the question, "is the world eternal or created?" Science can indeed weaken the arguments of the "philosophers" for the eternity of the world; beyond that, it can make the creation of the world probable; but it cannot demonstrate it; it must finally leave the question unanswered and accept the solution presented by revelation.[18] Thus Maimonides acknowledges a supernatural truth as such.

From here we glance back at the teaching of Averroes. We have left open the question whether Averroes acknowledges supernatural truths or not. Against the affirmative answer it has been contended that there could not be supernatural truths for Averroes precisely because Islam has no official spiritual doctrine.[19] But we see that in any case this argument has no demonstrative force; for Judaism too has no official spiritual doctrine, and yet there is for Maimonides a supernatural truth. But though comparison with Maimonides' teaching does nullify the argument in question, it confirms the view which this argument was meant to support. Maimonides' assertion of the insufficiency of human intellect takes its concrete meaning as an assertion of the insufficiency of human intellect to answer the question, "created world or eternal world?" Indeed for Maimonides it is known that Scripture teaches the creation of the world and—what is even more important for him—that Judaism forfeits its foundation if the assertion of creation is abandoned.[20] Averroes on the contrary considers the question "creation or eternity of the world?" irrelevant to dogma (13,

17–14, 5). Thus he lacks the most important reason that brings Maimonides to assert the insufficiency of human intellect and its dependence on revelation. From this we conclude that Averroes basically acknowledges the sufficiency of human intellect, and thus that the passages in which he speaks of a superiority of the theoretical teaching of revelation over that of reason are in need of "interpretation."

The question whether human intellect is sufficient or insufficient, whether it needs or does not need guidance by revelation, whether it is in this sense free or bound, proves to be secondary if one considers that for Averroes no less than for Maimonides the primacy of the law is firmly established: philosophizing is commanded by the law, philosophy is authorized by the law. The freedom of philosophy depends upon its bondage. On this assumption philosophy as authorized by the law is nothing other than the understanding or the demonstration of the truth already imparted by the law, nothing other than the *appropriation of the law.*

C. Gersonides

On the whole, if not in every important point, the philosophic teaching of Gersonides can be characterized as a reconciliation of the teaching of Maimonides with that of Averroes. In any case his doctrine of the sufficiency of reason, which will be discussed here, stands between Maimonides' assertion of its insufficiency and Averroes's assertion of its sufficiency. Since Gersonides's thought moves within the limits marked out by the positions of Maimonides and Averroes, the primacy of the law, and the meaning of philosophy determined thereby, is for him a self-evident premise.

Like Maimonides in the *Guide,* Gersonides in the *Milhamot Ha-shem* addresses only such Jews as "have fallen into confusion through these mighty questions" and whose intellect is not content with what one can no more than declare, but only with what one understands.[21] He himself

need not demonstrate from scratch that philosophizing is emancipated by the law; he can depend on Maimonides as his authority for this. Maimonides showed that we have to believe what has been demonstrated by speculation, and that in case of a conflict between speculation and Scriptural text the text is to be interpreted so as to be in accord with speculation.[22]

Gersonides draws from this a consequence with which —or at least, with the explicit statement of which—he goes beyond Maimonides. He makes it his principle *first* to carry out the entire inquiry as a scientific inquiry and only *then* to make it clear that the result of the scientific inquiry is the opinion of the Torah.[23] He thereby attributes to science a far greater freedom than Maimonides does. He is aware that he thereby diverges from Maimonides: he sees himself compelled to come to terms explicitly with Maimonides. This coming to terms is the most important subject matter of the preface to the *Milhamot.*

In this preface Gersonides discusses first—in order to clear away the objections that could make his undertaking questionable from the outset—Maimonides' decision about the possibility of mastering scientifically the problem of the creation of the world.[24] He opposes this decision. That he is not content with it is all the less surprising since Maimonides himself threw it into doubt by incidentally explaining that someone other than himself might perhaps have a demonstration of the creation; he himself can do no *more* than to acknowledge his bafflement; in any case no demonstration is known to him.[25] Is there not implicit in this a challenge to his successors to strive for the "knowledge of what remained concealed from their predecessors"?[26] But Maimonides' statement could also be taken quite differently: if even Maimonides, the "crown of the wise," acknowledged his inability to solve the problem under discussion, would it not then be "impudence and presumption"[27] to try to solve it? Gersonides takes this obvious objection into account. He replies: what was concealed from the predecessors need not, merely for that reason, remain

concealed from the successors; for otherwise no philosopher would know anything that he had not learned from others; but if this were the case, there would be altogether no science; the one who deserves censure is not he who diverges from his predecessors, but only he who makes erroneous assertions.[28] Gersonides is determined to take seriously the possibility, which Maimonides only intimated and perhaps did not intend seriously, that someone other than Maimonides could master the problem of creation. In the belief that the successors could know what had remained concealed from the predecessors, that "time brings about the ascertainment of truth,"[29] and thus in the belief in the possibility of the progress of science,[30] he calls into question the decision of Maimonides that had established for science an impassable barrier. He supports the right of free inquiry, unencumbered by the authority of the predecessors, acknowledging no standard other than objective truth.[31]

Maimonides had spoken of the fact that the philosophers have been quarrelling for three thousand years about the question "creation of the world or eternity of the world?"[32] In another passage, without referring specifically to the creation problem, but certainly not without thinking also and especially of it, he had said: there are things for which man has "a mighty longing," although the human intellect is not capable of supplying a demonstration of these things; and precisely from the fact that man has so intense a longing for the knowledge of these things, there arises doubt and disagreement.[33] Gersonides also takes up these remarks of Maimonides explicitly. He objects: the longing to know the truth about the creation problem is *natural;* but a natural longing cannot be directed to something fundamentally unattainable; thus the solution of this problem is fundamentally possible and not, as Maimonides had concluded, fundamentally impossible.[34] Whereas the fact that man has this intense longing was for Maimonides a reason for caution against the temptation that arises from this longing,[35] it is for Gersonides a sign of its fulfillability. Thus Gersonides asserts not only man's *right* to

attempt to answer the questions transmitted by his predecessors as unanswered or even as unanswerable. Beyond this, he asserts man's *sufficiency* to answer at least the question immediately at issue in the discussion under consideration, the question "created world or eternal world?" But since this question is central, and since, furthermore, the reason Gersonides gives for the fundamental possibility of answering it actually puts beyond doubt the fundamental possibility of answering *all* questions for whose answer man has a natural longing, and since on the other hand Maimonides asserts the general insufficiency of human intellect as well, it must therefore be said that Gersonides opposes to Maimonides' assertion of insufficiency the assertion of sufficiency.

Maimonides had made it a principle to explain the teachings of metaphysics not in a clear and coherent order, but in various passages of his work and interspersed with other subjects. He was brought to this renunciation of the transparency of his presentation not only by the law's express prohibition (of openly imparting the secrets of the Torah), but also and particularly by objective necessity; the subject matter of metaphysics is not always and not uninterruptedly accessible to view as are the subject matters of the other sciences, which can therefore be presented methodically and transparently; instead it sometimes reveals itself and sometimes withdraws from view; for this reason the only suitable way of speaking about God is speech in similitudes and riddles, and for this reason the renunciation of similitudes and riddles, which is necessary for a scientific treatise, has as a consequence that the speech becomes obscure and brief.[36] The kind of communication appropriate to metaphysics, esoteric communication, is grounded in the insufficiency of man to the knowledge of God. Since Gersonides replaces the assertion of insufficiency with the assertion of sufficiency, there is no necessity for him to use in metaphysics a mode of presentation different from that which is usual in the other sciences. He expressly argues against the writers who—with the intention of

making their thoughts unintelligible to the multitude—make the easy difficult through the arrangement of their statements and the obscurity of their speech. In opposition to these writers, he makes a principle of copiousness of statement and clarity of arrangement.[37] It is not enough for him to deny in this way that the open communication of metaphysical teachings is forbidden; he even asserts that such communication is a *duty:* just as God, out of pure goodness, communicates being and perfection to all beings, so should man make others perfect with the perfection that he has attained; and for this reason it would be most pernicious if he should refuse to communicate his knowledge to others.[38] Thus, going beyond Maimonides and Averroes, Gersonides asserts the *freedom of public communication*—for all communication through books is public communication[39] —of philosophic truths.

In light of the above, freedom of philosophizing is to be understood in Gersonides as follows: (1) the right of philosophizing; (2) the complete carrying out of philosophic inquiry in total unconcern for the law; (3) the right of interpreting the law on the basis of the truths established by philosophy; and (4) the public communication of the truths established by philosophy. Is philosophy then simply free, according to Gersonides? We will now deal with the *apparent* restrictions on philosophic freedom that are found in his writings.

(1) Gersonides asserts against Maimonides the sufficiency of philosophy to the mastery of the creation problem. Yet he says in his commentary on the Pentateuch that a philosopher would be unlikely to come to know the truth about creation by way of speculation unless he let himself be guided in his inquiry by the Torah.[40] In this sense he says of his own comments on the creation that he was "miraculously" guided to them by the teachings of the Torah.[41] Obviously he is not hereby retracting his assertion of sufficiency; for it is quite consistent with the fundamental sufficiency of the human in-

tellect to the mastery of a problem that this mastery is very difficult and hence unlikely.

(2) Gersonides explains that one must rely upon Scripture with regard to the doctrine of miracles. How he means this is clear from the context: the point of departure from Scripture is no different in character than the point of departure from sense perception. If one wishes to inquire into a subject that is accessible to sense perception in principle but is not so accessible to the inquirer in practice, then one must get help from the reports of others who had sense perceptions of that subject matter at their disposal, "as the Philosopher did with regard to the kinds of living beings, and Ptolemy with regard to the aspects of the stars."[42]

(3) In his middle commentary on Aristotle's *Topics,* Averroes had classed among the themes whose dialectical treatment is useful the question whether the world was created or not. Against this Gersonides objects that this subject should not be argued dialectically, but should rather be accepted on the basis of prophecy, which verifies for the believers things whose explanation is not possible for the unbelieving philosophers; furthermore, the dialectical treatment of the problem of creation causes harm; for with the belief in creation stands or falls belief in the miracles related in the Torah, one of which is the revelation of the Torah itself.[43] Gersonides thereby forbids only the dialectical treatment of the problem of creation, not its philosophical treatment tout court. Still, it emerges from this polemic against Averroes that Gersonides does not, like Averroes, consider the creation question irrelevant to dogma, that he binds himself more closely than Averroes to the doctrine of the revelation.

(4) Gersonides asserts against Averroes the insufficiency of the human intellect to union with the agent intellect. His objection is that, as Averroes

himself admits, such union assumes that man has acquired all the concepts that the agent intellect has; but this assumption is unrealizable; for there are, for example, kinds of animals, plants, and minerals of which we can have no idea, because of their smallness or for other reasons.[44] In other passages he speaks of man's inability to gain exact knowledge of the dependence of the sublunar sphere on the celestial bodies; the cause of this inability is man's great essential and spatial distance from the stars.[45] In the preface to his commentary on the Pentateuch, he summarizes these observations by saying that it is impossible for us to gain full knowledge of the wisdom and grace contained in the creation. As for the discrepancy between this assertion of insufficiency and the assertion of sufficiency presented in the preface to the *Milhamot,* one might at first try to clear it up by recourse to a passage in the *Guide* which Gersonides undoubtedly took into consideration. Maimonides divides the subjects for whose knowledge human intellect is insufficient into subjects for whose knowledge man has no longing and subjects for whose knowledge man has a great longing; he includes among the former the number of the stars and the number of species of animals, minerals, and plants.[46] Now Gersonides in fact speaks of man's insufficiency precisely with a view to his insufficiency to knowledge of the species of animals etc., and knowledge of the stars; and he also asserts the connection between natural longing and sufficiency. Thus one might suppose that Gersonides asserts *against* Maimonides man's sufficiency to the knowledge of all subjects for whose knowledge he has a natural longing, while he asserts *with* Maimonides man's insufficiency to the knowledge of certain subjects for whose knowledge man has no longing. But this solution of the difficulty is impossible. Gersonides asserts, in the same context in which he

> speaks of man's insufficiency to knowledge of the stars, that man has a great longing precisely for knowledge of these "deep subjects;" for the nobler a thing is, the more intense is our longing for knowledge of that thing, so that we have a greater longing for imperfect knowledge of the noble thing than for perfect knowledge of the mean thing.[47] But here Gersonides appears to contradict himself completely, for he appears to assert, in contradiction to his assertion about the connection between natural longing and sufficiency, that man's most intense longing is precisely for the knowledge of those subjects whose knowledge is most difficult. But just herein lies the solution: the knowledge of the subjects for which man has the most intense longing is—since these subjects are the most exalted, the most essentially and spatially distant from man—the most *difficult;* but—(and the naturalness of the longing is ample evidence of this)—it is *not impossible;* hence what follows from the difficulty of the inquiry is *not* that "we must stay our hand from this inquiry" but, on the contrary, this inquiry's especial praiseworthiness and urgency.[48] Thus, even if Gersonides asserts the insufficiency of man in a certain sense, in any case no limitation on the freedom of inquiry follows from this, for it does not follow from Gersonides's account of man's insufficiency that any definite limit on human inquiry can be fixed.

The restriction on philosophic freedom that Gersonides himself recognizes is in truth much more radical: it does not emerge at the end of philosophy, but underlies philosophy. "It must not remain hidden from us that it is impossible for us to know completely the wisdom and grace contained in the being of the Torah; rather we know little about it and we misconstrue much about it—just as it is impossible for us to know completely the wisdom and grace contained in the being of the existing things as they are; rather we know

little of the wisdom contained in their creation."[49] The Torah, like the world, is a work of infinite wisdom and grace and thus is knowable to the finite intellect only to a small extent; the Torah itself is a *world, in* which man lives, to the understanding of which he should apply himself according to his powers, but which always contains *more* of wisdom and goodness than man can observe. Hence the Torah is—not somehow a limit on inquiry, for inquiry encounters no limit in discovering the wisdom and grace it contains, but—a *guideline* for inquiry.[50] The Torah—like the world, *as* a "world"—is *prior to* philosophy. The primacy of the law stands just as firm for Gersonides as for Maimonides and Averroes. It remains to ask how the law, which at first is accepted by these philosophers only as actual, as given, comes to be understood by them in its potentiality, and thus how they justify it philosophically.

CHAPTER 3

The Philosophic Foundation of the Law: Maimonides's Doctrine of Prophecy and its Sources[1]

I

Prophetology is a central part of the doctrine of the *Guide of the Perplexed.* Some conception of its difficulties[2] is given by the list of conditions which, according to Maimonides's doctrine, the prophet must satisfy. The prophet must have at his disposal: (1) a perfect intellect; (2) perfect morals; (3) a perfect imagination; (4) the faculty of courage; (5) the faculty of divination; and (6) the faculty of government (of men). What do these various conditions of prophecy have in common with one another? What gives this rhapsody a unified, lucid order? Our orientation must take its departure from a correct understanding of the fact that prophetology is a central part of the doctrine of the *Guide.* This fact, correctly understood, means that the position for whose clarification and defense the *Guide* was written is possible only if prophecy exists in the sense explicated by Maimonides's prophetology. Hence the understanding of his prophetology is entirely dependent on understanding the position associated with it. Starting from a provisional understanding of this position, we develop the part of his prophetology that can be understood on that basis (Part II). The other part of Maimonides's prophetology cannot be elucidated, either in itself or in relation to the first part, from

Maimonides's own statements; this is because Maimonides in his prophetology follows a centuries-old reigning philosophic tradition whose premises he no longer even mentions. He does not follow this tradition slavishly: on the one hand he restricts its doctrines, and on the other hand he extends them; but he remains within a circle of question and possible answer already marked out before him. It is therefore necessary to return to his sources. We must ask therefore about the relation of his prophetology to the prophetology of Alfarabi and Avicenna. In the light of these sources we interpret first (Part III) the part of his prophetology not discussed in Part II, and finally the entire system of his prophetology (Part IV). The complete interpretation of the prophetology will, for its part, contribute to a deeper understanding of Maimonides's position (Part V).

II

One can with a certain right call Maimonides's position "medieval religious Enlightenment." With a certain right: namely if one accepts the view that not only for the modern Enlightenment—and thus for the Age of Enlightenment *proper,* from which the expression "Enlightenment" is customarily *transferred* to certain phenomena of the Middle Ages (and of antiquity)—but also for Maimonides and his predecessors and successors in the Middle Ages,[3] it is a matter of the freedom of human thought, the "freedom of philosophizing." But one must not for a moment leave any doubt that these medieval philosophers were precisely *not* Enlighteners in the proper sense; for them it was *not* a question of *spreading* light, of educating the *multitude* to rational knowledge, of *enlightening;* again and again they enjoin upon the philosophers the duty of *keeping secret* from the unqualified multitude the rationally known truth; for them—in contrast to the Enlightenment proper, that is, the modern Enlightenment—the *esoteric* character of philosophy was unconditionally established. To be sure, even in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were men

who, to quote Voltaire, claimed: "Quand la populace se mêle à raisonner, tout est perdu;" and on the other hand, even men like Maimonides had in mind *a certain* enlightenment of all men.[4] But if one considers that the modern Enlightenment, as opposed to the medieval, generally *publicizes* its teachings, one will not object to the assertion that the medieval Enlightenment was essentially esoteric, while the modern Enlightenment was essentially exoteric. Even the most provisional characterization of Maimonides's position must not leave out of account this specific difference from the modern Enlightenment.

The esoteric character of the "medieval religious Enlightenment" is based on the prevailing ideal of the *theoretical* life, just as the exoteric character of the modern Enlightenment is based on the conviction—prevalent long before its formulation, foundation and radicalization by Kant—of the primacy of *practical* reason. Hence one can provisionally characterize Maimonides's position as follows: it maintains the Greek ideal of the life of *theory,* as classically explicated by Aristotle at the end of the *Nichomachean Ethics,* on the assumption of the *revelation.* Two things accordingly are established for Maimonides: first, that the revelation is *simply* binding, and second, that for a man to be a perfect man is *simply* a matter of living the life of theory. These heterogeneous convictions are unified by the fact that the summons and education to the theoretical life is considered the highest (though not the only) end of the revelation. After all, Scripture commands men "to know God," and the highest subject of theory is the highest being, that is, God. Hence Maimonides teaches that the specific property of the revelation, of the divine law, as opposed to all merely human laws, is concern for the improvement of belief, that is, for the dissemination of correct opinions about "God and the angels," the education of men to true knowledge of all that is.[5]

The revelation itself, then, summons to philosophizing the men suited to it; the divine law itself commands philosophizing. Philosophy, *free on the basis of this authorization,*

takes for its subject matter all that is. Thus the revelation itself, like all that is, becomes its subject matter. It is in prophetology that the revelation, as the *law* given by God through a *prophet,* becomes a subject matter of philosophy.

If the revelation were merely the miraculous deed of God, it would be simply beyond all human understanding. The revelation is intelligible only insofar as God's deed of revelation is carried out through second causes, is worked out in the creation, in created *nature.* If it is to be *wholly* intelligible, it must be simply a *natural* fact. The means through which God carries out the deed of revelation is the prophet, that is, an extraordinary man, preeminent above all, but in any case a *man.* Therefore the philosophic understanding of the revelation, the philosophic foundation of the law, means the explanation of prophecy from the *nature of man.*

Maimonides was able to presuppose such an explanation of prophecy. The Islamic Aristotelians, the Falasifa, had taught that prophecy is a certain perfection of human nature that the suitably endowed man necessarily achieves through suitable practice. Maimonides accepts this teaching with the single reservation that the suitably endowed and suitably prepared man does not *necessarily* become a prophet: God can, at his discretion, deny prophecy to such a man. This miraculous denial of prophecy, however, has essentially the same character as the miraculous denial of the exercise of the faculty of vision or the faculty of moving one's hand.[6] But this means that it is only the denial of prophecy that is miraculous, not prophecy as such; prophecy as such is natural.[7] Therefore, although the suitably endowed and prepared man does not necessarily become a prophet, it is still necessary that the prophet be a suitably endowed and prepared man. Prophecy is bound to certain conditions. These conditions, as Maimonides teaches in agreement with the Falasifa, are perfection of the intellect, of the morals, and of the imaginative faculty.[8] One understands why precisely these conditions are necessary if one asks: how must prophecy be constituted such that, under

the revelation communicated by prophets, the theoretical life as the specific perfection of man is possible, or, such that the specific property of the revelation as opposed to all merely human laws can be concern for the dissemination of correct opinions about "God and the angels."

If the revelation is to communicate the fundamental theoretical truths, then the bringer of the revelation, the prophet, must have at his disposal the knowledge of these truths. He must at least be *also* a philosopher, an actual knower; the perfection of the intellect, acquired through practice and instruction, is a condition of prophecy.[9]

The simply binding revelation is addressed to all, but only some, only few have the capacity for the theoretical life. Hence the truths to which, or on the basis of which, the revelation is simply binding must be communicated to the multitude in proportion to their power of comprehension. These truths must therefore—at least in part—be presented figuratively. The prophet must therefore be a man who, while having philosophic knowledge at his disposal, is at the same time capable of presenting it figuratively; besides perfection of the intellect, perfection of the imaginative faculty is also a condition of prophecy.[10]

The process of acquiring knowledge is understood by Maimonides, as by the Falasifa, in accordance with the then prevelant view of the Aristotelian doctrine, as an actualization of the human intellectual capacity (the "hylic intellect") by the extra-human, super-human "active intellect," which is the lowest of the immaterial intelligences. The active intellect is in turn conditioned, in its being and activity, by God. But in the case of prophetic knowledge, the influence of the active intellect on the human intellect is not sufficient. Because the prophet must make himself intelligible also and precisely to the multitude, and therefore must speak figuratively, the active intellect must in his case influence also the imaginative faculty. We have now collected the elements united in Maimonides's definition of prophecy. This definition runs: "Prophecy in its essence is an emanation emanating from God through the active in-

tellect first to the intellectual faculty and then to the imaginative faculty."[11]

Therefore, since in the case of prophecy not only the intellect (as in the case of philosophic knowledge), but also the imaginative faculty is influenced by the active intellect, prophecy is, as Maimonides explains immediately following his definition of prophecy, "the highest rank of man and the uttermost perfection that can be found in the human race." This in itself makes the prophet unconditionally *superior* to the philosopher, and *a fortiori* to all other men. But he is superior to the philosopher even in the philosopher's own sphere, as a knower: he can know *immediately,* without "premises and conclusions," what all other men can know only mediately; consequently he can have at his disposal insights that could not be attained by the man whose knowledge is merely philosophic.[12] So it is understandable that, with regard to the central question that man is incapable of answering scientifically (the question whether the world is eternal or created), Maimonides can instruct the philosopher to follow the prophet.[13] The philosopher in his philosophizing can take his bearings by the prophet, since the prophet has at his disposal insights that are not accessible to merely philosophic knowledge.

But the prophet's superiority over the philosopher is called into question by the very fact in which his superiority first emerged: the collaboration of the imaginative faculty in the act by which he acquires knowledge. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that the entire *Guide* is devoted to a critique of the imaginative faculty. Above all, the arguments of the first part, whose purpose is to protect the purity of the concept of God and to combat all conceptions that call God's absolute unity into question, are directed against an imaginative understanding of the Scripture. The imaginative faculty is flatly *opposed* to the intellect; it grasps only the particular, not the general; in its activity it cannot in any way free itself from matter, and therefore can never come to know a Form; for this reason one must not pay it any attention at all. It necessarily im-

pairs the activity of the intellect;—liberation from its influence is an indispensable condition of true knowledge.[14] Under these circumstances Spinoza appears to be merely drawing a consequence when, in a polemic against Maimonides, he says that anyone distinguished by an especially strong imaginative faculty—as are the prophets, in Maimonides's and Spinoza's view—is especially ill qualified for pure knowledge, and when he therefore denies that the prophets had anything more than vulgar knowledge.[15] But this "consequence" is so obvious that it would not have escaped Maimonides if it had actually been the consequence of his doctrine.

First of all it must be observed that the distrust of the imaginative faculty, the depreciation of the imaginative faculty, is maintained in Maimonides's prophetology; according to this doctrine, what distinguishes the highest rank of prophecy, the prophecy of Moses, is precisely the fact that the imaginative faculty does *not* collaborate in it.[16] But with this observation not much appears to have been gained, because in any case the "ordinary" prophets—all the prophets except Moses—must be superior to the philosophers in spite of the collaboration of the imaginative faculty in their knowledge and even because of this collaboration. There remains therefore the problem how the collaboration of the imaginative faculty can be the basis of a superiority. But this much follows in any case: the ordinary prophets' knowledge stands between Moses's knowledge, which is free of the collaboration of the imaginative faculty, and the philosophers' knowledge, which is likewise free of the collaboration of the imaginative faculty; hence the difference between the greatest prophet and the philosophers can be ascertained without any consideration of the imaginative faculty; this difference includes both the difference between Moses and the ordinary prophets and the difference between the ordinary prophets and the philosophers; thus the difference between the ordinary prophets and the philosophers, and therewith the initially paradoxical possibility that the collaboration of the imaginative fac-

ulty is the basis of the prophets' superiority over the philosophers, becomes intelligible from the deeper difference. We must therefore ask how, according to Maimonides's teaching, Moses's knowledge differs from the knowledge of the philosophers.

The natural representative of the philosophers is *the* Philosopher, Aristotle. Now of Aristotle it is the case that everything he says about the world below the lunar sphere is undoubtedly true, while his views about the upper world, especially about the separate intelligences, are in part only probable, and in part actually false.[17] What is true of Aristotle is all the more true of all other non-prophetic men: man can know only the world below the lunar sphere, the world that surrounds him, lies before his eyes and is familiar to him, the world to which he belongs, *his* world; only this lower world is directly accessible to him; his knowledge of the upper world necessarily remains fragmentary and doubtful. The terms "upper" and "lower" world express not only a spatial relationship but also a difference of rank. The upper world is the world higher in rank; it is inaccessible to human knowledge not only because of its spatial distance but also because of its high rank. The lower world is the world of becoming and passing away; the ground of all becoming and passing away—of all imperfection in general—is matter; matter, our limitation by it and our dependence on it, is the reason why we can only inadequately fulfil our proper and highest destiny, the knowledge of the upper world, of "God and the angels."[18] The highest objects of knowledge are secrets from us; only occasionally does the truth shine on us so that we suppose it is day, but it is at once withdrawn again from our view by matter and our matter-bound life. We live in a deep dark night, only occasionally lit up by flashes of lightning. The rank-ordering of men can be represented by this image. One man is illuminated by flash after flash with only brief intermissions, so that for him night almost turns into day; this rank of almost continuous life in the light is the rank of Moses. For others the flashes occur only at great inter-

vals; this is the rank of the other prophets.[19] And finally there are men whom only one flash illumines once in the whole night; to this rank belong those of whom it is said, "They prophesied, but they did so no more." Then there is a class of men whose darkness has never been illumined by a lightning flash, but only by polished bodies of the kind of certain stones that shine at night; and even this small light does not shine on us (!) continuously, but appears and vanishes again immediately. Finally there are men who see no light at all. This last class is the multitude of the ignorant. The first three classes comprise all prophets, from the highest to the lowest prophet. Thus the class whose darkness is illuminated only by a small and indeed a borrowed, indirect light must be the class of the philosophers. Hence it is by the indirectness of their knowledge of the upper world that the philosophers differ from the prophets, who have at their disposal a direct knowledge, greater or lesser, of the upper world.[20] The ordinary prophets differ from Moses in that they do not live, like him, continuously in the light, but are illuminated by lightning flashes only at greater intervals. In the *Mishneh Torah* (*Yesodei ha-Torah* VII 6) Maimonides expresses this difference as follows: the ordinary prophets do not have prophetic knowledge at their disposal whenever they wish, whereas prophecy does rest upon Moses whenever he wishes; Moses does not have to prepare himself for prophecy like the other prophets, he *is* always prepared. In the passage cited it is mentioned as a further difference that in the course of their prophetic knowledge the ordinary prophets are in fear, bewilderment, and agitation, while Moses receives his prophecy in repose and steadiness. If we think back to the simile of the deep dark night and the lightning flashes that illuminate it, we understand what Maimonides is alluding to with his talk of the ordinary prophets' bewilderment: the all-too-dazzling, unfamiliar light of direct knowledge of the upper world bewilders and terrifies the ordinary prophets. And if the philosophers differ from the prophets in not knowing this bewilderment and terror, they owe this "superiority" solely to the circum-

stance that on them only the "small light" of indirect knowledge shines: it is *because* the prophet sees more and more directly than the philosopher that he is bewildered. From this it can also be understood how the collaboration of the imaginative faculty in prophetic knowledge can be the basis of the prophet's superiority over the philosopher: it is *because* the prophet knows more and more directly than the philosopher, *because* he is blinded by the all-too-dazzling, unfamiliar light, that he presents the known figuratively; the known fills him *completely,* seizes him completely, thus including his imaginative faculty as well. Since the imaginative faculty is completely seized, put completely into service, "from above," it certainly cannot *derange,* as it deranges philosophic knowledge in the case of other men. The prophet represents "God and the angels" figuratively and thus corporeally not because he *holds* them to be corporeal—only the ignorant do this—but because he has come to know them directly in their incorporeality, and thus more clearly than the philosopher has; his understanding of the upper world is precisely *not* an imaginative *understanding;* the figurative *representation* of the known results from his superabundant knowledge. The collaboration of the imaginative faculty in the prophet really rests not upon an inferiority of his knowledge to philosophic knowledge, but upon an infinite superiority to it: the prophet stands in *direct* union with the upper world.

Now it is possible for us to understand the third condition of prophecy—the perfection of morals. The express emphasis on this condition might at first appear superfluous, for moral perfection appears to be an indispensable condition of intellectual perfection. Yet experience shows that there are men of intellectual perfection who are still ruled by the desire for sensual pleasures and thus far removed from moral perfection. How is this fact to be understood? An intellectually perfect man who is not a prophet is undoubtedly filled *also* with desire for knowledge, and he can satisfy this desire only insofar as he frees himself from desire for the lower pleasures; but he is not *completely* filled

with desire for knowledge. Man is barred from knowledge of the upper world by his bondage to *his* world, by his corporeality and sensuality. Usually he is completely engrossed in his inclinations and endeavors in this world. That this is so is shown in his dreams: when dreaming, man has in a certain sense detached himself from the world around him; but what he dreams is completely determined by his worldly inclinations and endeavors. Hence a man may well have a strong desire for knowledge and accordingly, if he is suitably endowed and trained, may achieve intellectual perfection; but it is not necessary on that account that his most private inclinations and endeavors, as revealed in dream, be directed to knowledge. Thus it is not enough for man to free himself from sensual perception; he must free himself from all sensual appetite, from all dependence on the world; in the hidden depths of his heart he must want nothing but knowledge of "God and the angels." If he does so, if *therefore* he "*dreams*" of nothing but this knowledge, then, provided he is a man of perfect imaginative faculty and perfect intellect, he will perceive, in the condition of detachment from the material world—in dream and vision—only divine things, he will *see* only God and His angels.[21]

To summarize, the prophet is a man of perfect intellect and perfect imaginative faculty, who is completely ruled by desire for knowledge of the upper world. Only such a man can be in *direct* union with the upper world, can directly know "God and the angels." This knowledge, superior to all other human knowledge, qualifies him to be a *teacher* of men, a teacher *even* of the *philosophers;* in particular, the fact that even his imaginative faculty is wholly seized by knowledge of the upper world qualifies him for the figurative presentation of his knowledge and hence for the instruction of the *multitude.*

III

The part of Maimonides's prophetology discussed up to this point is intelligible entirely within itself. The real dif-

ficulties affect the part to be discussed now, and not only in itself but also in its relation to the first part. We begin with a preliminary orientation in the subject matter of the part of Maimonides's prophetology that has not yet been discussed.

Up to this point we have encountered the imaginative faculty only in its function of representing the insights of the intellect figuratively; the actualization of the intellect is the necessary condition of this function of the imaginative faculty. But in addition to this imitative activity of the imaginative faculty in prophetic knowledge, it also has an independent activity of its own, or at least an activity whose dependence on the activity of the intellect is not apparent from the outset; this activity is the basis of *knowledge of the future*. The future is known not only by prophets but also—though in an inferior way—by ordinary men, and by these it is known in the veridical dream. In sleep, when the senses are at rest, the imaginative faculty is free to receive the emanation of the active intellect; in this way the future becomes known to man. The activity of the imaginative faculty in veridical dream differs only in degree from its activity in prophetic knowledge of the future; the imaginative faculty of the prophet is of the greatest possible perfection, but it is the same faculty in him as in all men. The veridical dream arises through the influence of the active intellect on the imaginative faculty, just as philosophy is actualized through the influence of the active intellect on the (human) intellect. If the active intellect affects both the intellect *and* the imaginative faculty, then prophecy occurs.[22] The question is whether Maimonides means that the intellect and the imaginative faculty collaborate in the prophet's knowledge of the future[23] in the same way as they collaborate in the figurative representation of theoretical insights. And this is not the only question that remains unanswered in Maimonides. He also does not answer the more fundamental question: how is it to be understood that such essentially different activities as the figurative representation of theoretical insights and knowledge

of the future are both characteristic of the prophet? We shall attempt to answer this question through a consideration of Maimonides's *sources*. In order to justify this procedure we must explain the general relationship of Maimonides's prophetology to the prophetology of the Falasifa.

Maimonides himself says that his doctrine is completely in accord with the doctrine of the Falasifa—with the exception of *one* point. This one point is the reservation that prophecy, which occurs under fixed conditions, does not, as the Falasifa hold, occur necessarily, but can be denied by God at His discretion in spite of the fulfilment of all the conditions. Maimonides's reservation, then, does not affect the essence and the natural conditions of prophecy. According to the doctrine of the Falasifa, the conditions of prophecy are perfection of the intellect, the morals, and the imaginative faculty; this is what Maimonides teaches too. According to Maimonides, prophecy in its essence is an emanation from God, issuing through the medium of the active intellect first to the intellect and then to the imaginative faculty; the Falasifa had already taught the same thing before him. Thus, in the decisive accounts of prophecy, Maimonides is, according to his own express assurance, in agreement with the Falasifa.[24]

The writings of Alfarabi and Avicenna come into account as the foremost sources of Maimonides. The most comprehensive and detailed presentation of *Alfarabi*'s prophetology is found in his work *The Ideal State*.[25] We shall consider only this presentation in the following. Alfarabi speaks of prophecy in two different passages of the *Ideal State*. In each of these passages he treats a different kind of prophecy, although without expressly saying so: the first kind he treats is based on the imaginative faculty alone, the second on both the intellect and the imaginative faculty. The imaginative faculty has three functions: it preserves the impressions of sensibilia; it combines these impressions; finally and preeminently, it reproduces the sensibilia.[26] In general, and thus also for its reproductive function in particular, it is dependent on receiving material

from elsewhere. In the waking state it receives material especially from sense perception. But since in this state it is entirely in the service of the other faculties of the soul, its own independent activity cannot develop; this development occurs in sleep, when the senses and the intellect are at rest. It then reproduces what the senses have perceived; sometimes it elaborates by analogy what the intellect presents to it; by analogy—viz. since it is not capable of receiving the intelligibles as such, it imitates them by representing them sensibly. Thus it represents the intelligibles of the highest perfection (such as the first cause, the immaterial existences, the heaven) by means of the most perfect sensibles (things of beautiful appearance). In the same way it elaborates analogically what is presented to it by the other faculties of the soul (the nutritive faculty, etc.).[27] The imaginative faculty can also receive content from the active intellect. In this case it takes over the functions of the (human) intellect. There are two kinds of intellect: the theoretical, which knows the intelligibles; and the practical, which has to do with the particulars (*particularia*). If the active intellect works on the imaginative faculty, the latter receives *either* intelligibles *or* particulars—and especially future particulars. It necessarily represents the intelligibles as sensibles; but as for the particulars, it sometimes presents them as they actually are, while in other cases it represents them by other particulars that are more or less similar to them.[28] Thus, knowledge of the future arises in the same way as sensible apprehension of intelligibles: through the influence of the active intellect on the imaginative faculty. There are various ranks of imaginative comprehension. At the lowest rank and occurring most frequently is knowledge of the future in sleep, the veridical dream; higher than the dreamer of veridical dreams is he who grasps intelligibles in figurative form while asleep; highest is he who is capable of receiving in the waking state both (future) particulars and the figures of intelligibles; this rank is the highest that the imaginative faculty can attain, and altogether the highest that man can reach

by means of the imaginative faculty. The condition of this (the first) kind of prophecy is then the highest perfection of the imaginative faculty.[29] The second kind of prophecy differs from the first in that its condition is not only the highest perfection of the imaginative faculty but also the actualization of the intellect. To the man who fulfills these conditions, God grants revelations through the mediation of the active intellect: what emanates from God to the active intellect, the active intellect then allows to emanate first to the intellect of the appropriately disposed man and then to his imaginative faculty.[30] Through what emanates from the active intellect to the prophet's intellect, he becomes a philosopher, and through what emanates from the active intellect to his imaginative faculty, he becomes a prophet, that is, one who warns about the future. His imaginative faculty must be so perfect that it can receive from the active intellect not only the particulars but also the intelligibles in sensible form.[31] The man who fulfills the stated conditions is capable of communicating what he has received from the active intellect in a manner adapted to the multitude.[32] This man stands at the simply highest rank of humanity[33]—in contradistinction to the first kind of prophet, who achieves only the highest rank of humanity attainable through the imaginative faculty alone.

Comparison of Maimonides's prophetology with that of Alfarabi shows[34] that Maimonides denies the lower, exclusively imaginative prophecy, which Alfarabi had recognized. For Maimonides, therefore, the highest rank of humanity and the highest rank of the imaginative faculty coincide in prophecy *per se,* while Alfarabi could distinguish the highest rank of the imaginative faculty as such from the simply highest rank of humanity.[35] Maimonides, then, recognizes as prophecy only the higher kind of prophecy. With regard to the latter, he is largely in agreement with Alfarabi. It is only an apparent difference that Alfarabi does not mention moral perfection as a condition of prophecy; that full agreement actually reigns between Maimonides and Alfarabi is shown by Alfarabi's statements

about happiness: happiness consists in freedom from matter; it is attained directly through the actualization of the intellect; but moral virtue is an indirect condition.[36] A real difference may lie in the fact that Alfarabi denies the possibility of super-philosophical knowledge of the upper world through prophecy: through the influence of the active intellect on his intellect the prophet becomes a philosopher[37]—nothing other and nothing higher than a philosopher.[38] Even if Maimonides's teaching on this important point differs from Alfarabi's, Maimonides does not thereby come into conflict with *the* Falasifa: he found in *Avicenna,* at any rate, the doctrine of the prophet's direct knowledge. According to Avicenna the highest capacity distinguishing the prophets is the capacity for direct knowledge, not based on syllogisms and proofs.[39]

Avicenna teaches[40] that the highest rank among men is held by those who have attained intellectual and moral perfection; among these in turn—and thus among all men—he who is disposed to the rank of prophecy is the most excellent.[41] The prophet is characterized by the following three capacities of his soul: (1) perfection of the imaginative faculty; (2) capacity to perform miracles; and (3) direct knowledge. The man who has at his disposal, in addition to intellectual and moral perfection, these three capabilities, receives revelations: he hears the word of God, and he sees God's angels in visible form. There is an order of rank among the three capacities characteristic of the prophets: imaginative prophecy occupies the lowest rank; higher than this is prophecy that has the power to alter matter, to work miracles; the highest rank is occupied by the prophecy consisting in the simply highest perfection of the theoretical intellect.[42] This must not be understood as if the prophet of the highest rank does not have at his disposal also the capabilities of the prophets of both other ranks. That Avicenna specifically accepts the collaboration of the imaginative faculty in prophecy as such, and therefore also in prophecy of the highest rank, is shown by his definition

of prophecy as such: prophecy is hearing the word of God and seeing the angels of God in *visible* form.[43]

We may therefore say that the decisive factors of Maimonides's prophetology are also found, in the same context, either in Alfarabi or in Avicenna or in both.[44] The only essential factor, at least in Avicenna's doctrine, that is lacking in Maimonides's prophetology is the doctrine of the prophets' miracle-working faculty. Admittedly there can be found in his writings several scattered statements in the sense of this doctrine,[45] but it emerges that they cannot be decisive if one recognizes the overall tendency of his doctrine of miracles. Here too his sources must be considered. In Islamic philosophy there are two opposing views on miracles.[46] According to the doctrine of the Kalam, miracles take place through the power of God, not through the activity of the prophet; the prophet's relation to the miraculous event is none other than that of announcing it beforehand; the occurrence of the previously announced miracle is the divine confirmation of the prophet; it is by means of this announcement that miracles proper differ from the miracles worked by holy men and sorcerers. In opposition to the Kalam, the Falasifa—on the grounds that whatever occurs does not spring from the unconditioned free will of God but must proceed from other occurrences and under fixed conditions—teach that miracles are performed and not just announced by the prophets. Maimonides is taking the principle of the Falasifa into account when he teaches that miracles are, in a certain sense, in nature: when God created nature, he put into it the faculty of bringing forth miracles at predetermined times; God lets the prophet know the time for which he should announce the occurrence in question, and this is the "sign" of the prophet.[47] Thus Maimonides, like the Falasifa, denies that God interferes at His free will in the world created by Him, but, on the basis of the Falasifa, he adheres to the view of the Kalam on the role played by the prophet in the miracle: the prophet only announces the miracle, he does not perform it; it is performed

by God. But if the miracle is performed by God and not by the prophet, then prophecy itself can depend on God's free miracle-working. This is why Maimonides can teach that prophecy can be miraculously withheld from a man who fulfills all the conditions of prophecy. This teaching is *the* reservation that he holds against the prophetology of the Falasifa. This reservation is possible only if the miracle is not really performed by the prophet. Thus, the fact that Maimonides abandons the doctrine of the prophet's miracle-working is the only factor distinguishing his prophetology from that of the Falasifa. This confirms his own statement that his prophetology differs in only one point—namely in the reservation mentioned—from that of the Falasifa. Thus, in light of the fundamental agreement between Maimonides and the Falasifa, we have a fundamental right, whenever Maimonides's own statements leave us in uncertainty, to interpret the obscurities of his prophetology by recourse to the relevant doctrines of the Falasifa. Having established this right for ourselves, we return to the question left unanswered by Maimonides. This question runs: how is it to be understood that such fundamentally different activities as figurative representation of theoretical insights and knowledge of the future are both characteristic of the prophet?

If one returns to Alfarabi's doctrine, this obscurity is explained as follows. Knowledge of the future is knowledge of the particulars (*particularia*); knowledge of the particulars belongs to the *practical* intellect; when future things become known in veridical dream or in prophecy, the imaginative faculty is acting on behalf of the practical intellect. Knowledge of the intelligibles, whose sensible representation is the mark of prophecy, belongs to the *theoretical* intellect; when intelligibles become known in veridical dream or in prophecy, the imaginative faculty, which to be sure cannot apprehend the intelligibles as such, but must necessarily represent them figuratively, is acting on behalf of the theoretical intellect.[48] The fact that the prophet—the

prophet simply, according to Maimonides, or the prophet of the higher kind, according to Alfarabi—has at his disposal both knowledge of the intelligibles and knowledge of the future means, therefore, that the prophet has at his disposal (perfect) theoretical and practical knowledge. But theoretical knowledge consists in unclouded, pure intellectual apprehension of the intelligibles; the sensible representation of intelligibles has nothing to do with theoretical knowledge; the point of it is only to communicate to the multitude certain doctrines without which the existence of the community is not possible. While the purely intellectual "inner sense" of prophetic speeches transmits theoretical truths, the imaginative "outer sense" of these speeches transmits doctrines that are useful specifically for improving the condition of human communities.[49] Thus the collaboration of the imaginative faculty in prophetic knowledge—both in knowledge of the future and in sensible representation of the intelligibles, which occurs only for the sake of guiding the multitude—has in any case a practical purpose. It is, then, understandable how Maimonides can say that if the active intellect influences only man's imaginative faculty, he becomes a statesman and legislator or a dreamer of veridical dreams or a soothsayer or a sorcerer. All these activities, springing from influence on the imaginative faculty alone, and apparently having nothing in common with each other, do have in common the essential factor that they are *practical*. On the other hand, if his intellect alone is influenced by the active intellect, a man becomes a philosopher, a *theoretical* man; and if both his intellect and his imaginative faculty are influenced by the active intellect, he becomes a prophet.[50] Prophecy is therefore a union of theoretical and practical perfection (and also a heightening of each of these perfections beyond the measure attainable by non-prophets). As the active intellect must influence the prophet's intellect if the prophet is to be able to communicate theoretical truths to men, if he is to be able to be men's *teacher,* so must the active intellect

influence the prophet's imaginative faculty if he is to be able to fulfill his *practical* task. Prophecy is both theoretical and practical; the prophet is *teacher and governor in one.*

IV

If the necessary condition of prophecy is that the active intellect influences both the intellect and the imaginative faculty, and if its influence on the intellect alone makes a man a philosopher, while its influence on the imaginative faculty alone makes a man a statesman, a dreamer of veridical dreams, a soothsayer or sorcerer, then this means that the prophet is philosopher/statesman/seer/(miracle-worker) in one. Now, are the practical abilities that are "gathered up" in prophecy equivalent to one another? If one recalls the parallel in Alfarabi's *Ideal State,* where the prophet appears as philosopher and seer in one,[51] one might be inclined to see mantics as the supreme practical function of the prophet. Even the miracle-working of the prophet derives from mantics, in that the prophet's only contribution to a miracle is that he announces it beforehand. We must therefore ask: is mantics or politics the supreme function of the prophet? We sharpen the question: what is the final end of prophecy? Why does the human race depend on prophets?

The answer that Maimonides gives to this question, though he certainly does not give it expressly as such, runs: man is by nature a political being, and,[52] in contradistinction to the other living beings, he is by nature in need of association; on the other hand, in no other species is there so great a variety, even an opposition, in the character of the individuals as there is in the human species. Since, therefore, association is nowhere so necessary and nowhere so difficult as precisely among men, men need a *governor* to regulate the affairs of individuals in such a way that a concord based on statute replaces the natural opposition. Therefore the existence of the human race depends on the existence of human individuals who have the capacity of

governing; hence the divine wisdom that willed the existence of the human race had to give it this capacity. There are two kinds of government: legislation and rule. The legislator lays down the norms for affairs, the sovereign enforces compliance with them; the ruling government already assumes therefore the legislating government; the primary kind of government is *legislation*. Now legislation can have as its end either the bodily or the spiritual perfection of man; or rather—since the realization of the higher perfection necessarily assumes the realization of the lower—legislation can limit itself to the establishment of the means that serve bodily perfection, or it can strive for bodily perfection in the service of spiritual perfection. Spiritual perfection—more precisely, the perfection of the intellect—is the specific perfection of man.[53] The law directed to the specific perfection of man is a divine law, and its proclaimer is a *prophet*.[54] The prophet is therefore the proclaimer of a law directed to the specific perfection of man. But the law aims at making it possible to live together. Hence the prophet is the founder of a community directed to the specific perfection of man.

Maimonides's teaching has proved to be that the prophet is philosopher/statesman/seer/(miracle-worker) in one. Because the end of prophecy is the founding of the community directed to the specific perfection of man, we may conclude that the prophet must be philosopher/statesman/seer/(miracle-worker) in one *in order that* he may be the founder of the community directed to the specific perfection of man, the perfect community. If the founder of the perfect community must be a prophet, but the prophet is more than a philosopher, this means that the founding of the perfect community is not possible for a man who is only a philosopher. Hence the philosopher too is dependent on a law given by a prophet; the philosopher too must obey the prophet; he would have to obey him even if his theoretical insight were no less than the prophet's; for this theoretical insight would not make him capable of legislation; and man, as a political being, can live only under a law.

On the way to the definition of the prophet, "the prophet as philosopher/statesman/seer/(miracle-worker) in one is the founder of the perfect community," we came upon the question, "what is the end of prophecy?" We said that Maimonides certainly gives us an answer to this question, but not expressly as such. It must therefore still be shown that the doctrine of Maimonides to which we have made reference is, in his view, to be considered the answer to our question. To show this, we must go back again to the sources. Shemtob Falqera, in his interpretation of the chapter of Maimonides's *Guide* that deals implicitly with the end of prophecy (II 40), cites a parallel from the *Metaphysics* of Avicenna which evidently must be considered the closest source for Maimonides's exposition. This parallel becomes intelligible in its full bearing only if one considers it in the light of Avicenna's almost programmatic explanation of the place of prophetology in the whole of the sciences. From his treatise "On the Parts of the Sciences" it emerges that the science treating thematically of prophecy is, in his view, *politics*. This already means that the end of prophecy is political, that the supreme practical role of the prophet is not mantics but political government.[55]

In the previously-mentioned treatise, Avicenna first enumerates the subjects of politics: the kinds of regimes and political associations; the kind and manner of their maintenance and the cause of their decline; the way in which the various forms of state change into one another. Then he proceeds: "Of this, what has to do with kingship is contained in the book [sic] of Plato and of Aristotle on the state, and what has to do with *prophecy* and the *religious law* is contained in both of their books on the *laws* . . . this part of practical philosophy (viz. politics)[56] has as its subject matter the existence of prophecy and the dependence of the human race, for its existence, stability, and propagation, on the religious law. Politics deals both with all the religious laws collectively and with the specific characters of the individual religious laws by nation and epoch; it deals with the difference between divine prophecy and all

invalid pretensions."[57] In accordance with his classification of the sciences, Avicenna treats prophecy in the concluding portion of his *Metaphysics,* which is devoted to practical philosophy. To be sure, he speaks of prophecy also in his psychology, but in this context he discusses only the characteristic capacities of the prophets, and hence only the means, not the end and significance, of prophecy. That prophecy as such is not a theme of psychology is shown especially by the fact that, in his psychology, he treats the prophetic capacities not systematically but in quite disparate passages—wherever, that is, he is discussing a faculty of the soul whose highest perfection is characteristic of the prophet.

The dependence of the human race on prophecy is portrayed by Avicenna in essentially the same way as by Maimonides. Man differs from the animals in that his life cannot be perfect if he lives for himself alone; man can live properly as man only if he lives in community; the existence and the welfare of the human race depends on men's living in community; community presupposes reciprocal intercourse; this intercourse is not possible without regimen and justice; regimen is not possible without a lawgiver; the lawgiver must be able to address men and to bind them to the regimen given by him; he must therefore be a man. He must not let men abide in their opinions about justice and injustice; for each considers just what is advantageous to himself and unjust what is disadvantageous to himself; consequently the human race is dependent for its existence on such a man; but such a man is a *prophet.* It is therefore impossible that divine providence should not exercise care for this necessity. It is therefore necessary that there actually is (or was) a prophet. He must have characteristics that are lacking in other men, so that these may surmise his superiority and he may be distinguished from them.[58]

If one approaches this account of prophecy from the parallel statements of the *Guide,* one misses at first glance the sharp distinction between the divine law, whose end is the specific perfection of man and whose proclaimer is a

prophet, and the merely human law, whose end is only the perfection of the body and whose proclaimer is a statesman. Nonetheless, this distinction already proclaims itself in the passage cited (on pp. 122–123) from the treatise "On the Parts of the Sciences"; Avicenna distinguishes there between the part of politics dealing with *kingship* and the part dealing with *prophecy and religious law.* In a related context he says: the use of *politics* consists in coming to know how the communal relation among human individuals must be fashioned in order that they may mutually help one another towards the well-being of the *bodies* and the maintenance of the human race.[59] This statement compels us to ask: how, then, does prophecy differ from all that is merely political? We allow this question to be answered by Avicenna himself. In a treatise devoted specifically to the account of prophecy he says: the (prophetic) mission is the inspiration whose end is "the welfare of *both* worlds, that of (eternal) existence and that of passing-away, through science *and* political government. The commissioned one (the prophet) is he who proclaims what he has learned . . . through inspiration, in order that, through his views, *the welfare of the sensible world* may be achieved *through political government and [the welfare] of the intelligible world through science.*"[60] Thus prophecy differs from merely political government in having as its end not only, like the latter, the well-being of the body, the welfare of the sensible world, but also the perfection of the intellect, the specific perfection of man. Thus Maimonides's teaching on the end of prophecy is completely in agreement with the teaching of Avicenna.

Comparison of Maimonides's teaching with the teaching of Avicenna confirms the view that according to Maimonides's teaching the prophet as philosopher/statesman/seer/(miracle-worker) in one is the founder of the perfect community. Avicenna calls the perfect community "the excellent city" or "the city of beautiful conduct";[61] we may say rather "the ideal state." *The prophet is the founder of the ideal state.* The classic model of the ideal state is the *Platonic* state. Avicenna refers to Plato's works on the state,

the *Republic* and the *Laws,* as the classic presentations of politics, just as he refers to Aristotle's *Ethics* as the classic presentation of ethics; in particular, the *Laws* is for him the authoritative presentation of the philosophic teaching on prophecy.[62] To be sure, he mentions in this connection also Aristotle's *Politics;* but it can have been known to him only by title, since it was never translated into Arabic.[63] The following passage from Avicenna's greater *Metaphysics* shows how very decisive is the orientation precisely towards the Platonic state: "The first purpose of the legislator in legislating must be the articulation of the city into three parts: the rulers, the craftsmen, and the guardians."[64] Thus the prophet must divide the state according to the division prescribed by Plato in the *Republic.* The prophet is the founder of the Platonic state; the prophet carries out what Plato called for.[65]

The author of this view of prophecy appears to be *Alfarabi.* His engagement with Platonic politics is attested most manifestly by the fact that he composed an "epitome" or "summa" of Plato's *Laws.*[66] We have already mentioned that Alfarabi distinguishes two species of prophecy (v. *supra,* pp. 113 ff.). Now it is very important to observe in what context he treats each of the species. He speaks of the lower prophecy in the context of psychology; the higher prophecy he discusses—essentially as in Avicenna and Maimonides —only after he has treated "man's need for association and for mutual aid." He thus gives us to understand that the higher prophecy, prophecy proper, differs from vulgar mantics of all ranks in its *political* mission; the only context in which prophecy proper can be understood radically is that of politics. Here "politics" and "political" are to be understood in the Platonic sense: for Alfarabi it is not a matter of a state in general, but of the state directed to the specific perfection of man, the "excellent state," the ideal state. The sovereign of the ideal state, according to Alfarabi, must be a man of perfect intellect and a perfect imaginative faculty; he must be a man to whom God imparts revelation through the medium of the active intellect.[67] In other words, the

sovereign of the ideal state must be a prophet—a philosopher and seer in one.[68] He must have at his disposal by nature the following properties, *inter alia:*[69] he must love learning and learn easily; he must have a strong memory; he must not be eager for sensual pleasures; he must love the truth and hate deception; he must not be a money-lover; and finally, he must be "firmly resolved upon the object whose accomplishment he considers necessary, courageous about it, brave,[70] fearless and not faint-hearted." That is, the sovereign of the ideal state—and only a *prophet* can be the sovereign of the ideal state—must have by nature the qualities which, according to Plato's requirement, the *philosopher-kings* must have by nature.[71]

The prophetology of Maimonides and the Falasifa refers to Plato not only in assuming the union of philosophy and politics as a condition of the perfect state, whose founder can only be a prophet; also of Platonic origin is the way in which the prophet's being-a-philosopher is understood. The prophet is a man who, after receiving the *revelation* (*wachj*), is capable of bringing to men the *message* (*risala*) which leads to the welfare of the sensible world by means of political government and to the welfare of the intelligible world by means of science (v. *supra* p. 124). The revelation is an emanation from God which bestows upon the prophet, through the medium of the active intellect, direct knowledge of the upper world. Only direct knowledge of the upper world, it appears, makes the prophet capable of the government of men that is proper to him, namely, politics and science united in one. Maimonides illustrates the character of this direct knowledge through the following image. All men live from the outset in a deep dark night; for only a few men is this night ever illuminated at all; for most of these—the philosophers—by a borrowed, earthly light, and for a very few—the prophets—by lightning flashes from on high (v. *supra* pp. 108–110). In his commentary on the passage in the *Guide* where this image occurs, Shemtob Falqera refers to his explanation of a related passage in the same work (III 51). There he cites a parallel from Alfarabi

which says the following:[72] there are three ranks of men; the first is the rank of the *multitude;* the multitude know the intelligible things only in material forms; they are like those who live in a cave and on whom the sun has never shone; they see, as it were, only the shadows of things, never the light itself; the second rank is the rank of the *philosophers;* these know the intelligible things, but only indirectly, as one sees the sun in the water; what one sees in the water is only the image of the sun, not the sun itself; the philosophers are like men who have left the cave and beheld the light; the third rank is the rank of the blessed; the men of this rank see the thing in itself, they see as it were the light itself, in their seeing there is absolutely nothing of seeming, they themselves become the thing which they see. The relation, confirmed by Falqera's allusion, between the *Platonic cave-image* and Maimonides's image of the deep dark night illuminated by lightning flashes, warrants this view: just as, according to Plato, the perfect state can be actualized only by the philosopher who has ascended out of the cave into the light and has beheld the idea of the good, so, according to Maimonides and the Falasifa, the perfect state can be actualized only by the prophet, for whom the night in which the human race is stumbling about is illuminated by lightning flashes from on high, by direct knowledge of the upper world.

V

The prophet as philosopher/statesman/seer/(miracle-worker) in one is the founder of the ideal state. The ideal state is understood according to Plato's guidance: the prophet is the founder of the Platonic state. Plato's requirement that philosophy and political power must coincide if the true state is to become actual, Plato's concept of the philosopher-king, furnishes the outline whose filling-in in the light of the actual revelation yields the concept of prophecy held by the Falasifa and Maimonides. An understanding of this prophetology depends therefore on illuminating the rela-

tion between the concept of the prophet and the Platonic concept of the philosopher-king; it depends ultimately on illuminating the relation of the Falasifa's position to the position of Plato.

The relation of the Falasifa and Maimonides to Plato is characterized in the first place by the fact that the former proceed from an un-Platonic premise. For them the *fact* of the revelation is certain; for them therefore it is also certain that a simply binding law, a divine law, a law proclaimed by a prophet with the force of law, is actual. This law authorizes them to philosophize. In philosophizing, they inquire into the possibility of the actual law; they answer this inquiry within the horizon of Platonic politics; they understand the revelation in the light of Platonic politics. They derive Platonic politics from an un-Platonic premise—the premise of the revelation.

The attempt to understand the actual revelation within the horizon of Platonic politics compels modifications of the Platonic framework in the light of the actual revelation. It suffices to recall the significance of the prophet's knowledge of the future (and miracle-working) for Maimonides and the Falasifa. In this way the Platonic framework is only modified, stretched as it were, but not exploded; it remains the spiritual bond that unites philosophy and politics. The modification in question implies, as such, a *critique* of Plato. This critique gets its whole weight from being able to appeal to the fact of the revelation. From the *factual* answering of the Platonic inquiry into the true state there follows a modification of the Platonic sketch, that is, a critique of the Platonic answer. If the founder of the perfect community can only be a prophet, this implies that the founding of the perfect community is not possible for the man who is only a philosopher. It is not the case that, as Plato holds, the coincidence of philosophy and political power suffices for the realization of the true state; the ruler-philosopher must be *more* than a philosopher. In sketching the true state, Plato predicted the revelation; but just as, in general, it is only the fulfilment that teaches a full under-

standing of the prediction, so the Platonic sketch must be modified on the basis of the actual revelation, the actual ideal state.

The way to the modification of the Platonic outline proposed by the Falasifa and Maimonides had already been opened in the Hellenistic age. In this age we encounter the teaching that in primeval times ruler, philosopher and seer coincided in one.[73] This teaching differs from the Platonic concept of the philosopher-ruler in two factors apparently—but only apparently—having nothing in common with one another: (1) its high estimation of mantics; and (2) the conviction that the perfect condition of humanity actually existed in antiquity; in this teaching too the ideal rulership is a fact, not merely a desideratum. Another factor distinguishing the Falasifa's prophetology from Plato's doctrine of the philosopher-ruler, the doctrine of the prophet's miracle-working, is anticipated by neo-Pythagorean views.[74] The doctrine of the prophet's direct knowledge, by which he differs from the philosopher, is anticipated especially by Philo.[75]

But what must it mean that the prophetology anticipated in the Hellenistic age is conditioned ultimately and decisively by Platonic politics? Is this fact a mere curiosity? Is it solely based on or due to the circumstance that Plato just happened to be considered "the divine Plato," and that besides this the politics of the other great man, Aristotle, remained unknown as a result of a remarkable accident? The dependence of the prophetology of Maimonides and the Falasifa on Platonic politics would be more than a curiosity and an accident if these men were, after all,—Platonists, if their un-Platonic premise—the fact of the revelation—were at bottom not so un-Platonic as it seems at first glance. Hermann *Cohen* claimed that Maimonides, at least, was a Platonist.[76] We adopt this claim as our own, but on the basis of a consideration which completely diverges in detail from Cohen's grounds, and which compels us to include the Falasifa in this claim as well.

The claim that the Falasifa and Maimonides are, after

all, to be classed as Platonists has, at first, everything against it; or, insofar as anything does speak for it at first, even what speaks for it robs it of all certainty and all significance. For the *doctrine* of the Falasifa—and of course one must first of all keep to the doctrine—is much more Aristotelian on the one hand, and neo-Platonic on the other, than properly Platonic; hence they appear to be Platonists in no other sense than that every Aristotelian and every neo-Platonist is a pupil of Plato. But this is not the sense in which Cohen meant his claim; indeed it was one of the most important concerns of his philosophical-historical endeavors to conceive the relation of Aristotle to Plato as an irreconcilable *opposition*. Guided by this view of the relation between Aristotle and Plato, he arrived at a claim that is meaningful only on this premise, while this same premise—not to mention the express Aristotelianism of Maimonides—admittedly makes it paradoxical: the claim that "Maimonides was in deeper harmony with Plato than with Aristotle" (105).

Cohen understands the opposition between Platonic (Socratic) and Aristotelian philosophizing as the opposition between the primacy of inquiry about the good, about the right life, about the true state, and the primacy of interest in the contemplation of that which is and in knowledge of being.[77] But precisely if one views the relation of Plato and Aristotle in this way, one seems bound to identify the Falasifa and Maimonides unconditionally as Aristotelians. In Cohen's words, "That which Maimonides did not simply learn from Aristotle, but in which Aristotle was and remained for him, with all the depths of their difference, a model and guide, is the enthusiasm for pure theory, for scientific knowledge for its own sake and as the final, absolute end of human existence."[78]

Cohen most forcibly establishes his paradoxical doubt of Maimonides's Aristotelianism with the lapidary sentence, "All honor to the God of Aristotle; but truly he is not the God of Israel" (81).[79] We cannot discuss here how Cohen seeks to show positively that Maimonides was a Platonist;

still less can we discuss the fact that and the reason why Cohen's statements about this are untenable in detail, and depend on a misconstruction of the historical evidence. We limit ourselves to emphasizing that Cohen's way of demonstrating his view in detail, and thus the untenability of this demonstration, leaves unaffected the insight that precedes this demonstration and guides it: the God of Aristotle is not the God of Israel; for this reason a Jew as Jew cannot be an Aristotelian; for him it can never at any time be left at a matter of the primacy of theory; he cannot assert this primacy unconditionally and unreservedly; if he asserts it, he must restrict it in some way, so that ultimately he calls it into question through this restriction.

Maimonides undoubtedly asserts the primacy of theory. But—and this is decisive—for him the philosopher does not occupy the highest rank in the human race: higher than the philosopher stands the prophet. If, therefore, there is anything that can call Maimonides's Aristotelianism into doubt, it is surely his prophetology. The precedence of the prophet over the philosopher lies partly, to be sure, in the superiority of prophetic, direct knowledge over philosophic, indirect knowledge, but also, at the same time, in the capacity for governing that distinguishes him from the philosopher: the prophet, in contradistinction to the philosopher who merely knows, is teacher and governor in one. In light of the fact that Maimonides and the Falasifa assert the precedence of prophecy over philosophy, and in such a way that they see the end of prophecy in the founding of the ideal state, they can be called Platonists in Cohen's sense. It has been shown above that, and in what sense, the prophetology of these philosophers must be characterized as Platonic in respect of its historical origin as well.

But under these circumstances, how is it to be understood that, apart from their prophetology, the Falasifa and Maimonides follow Aristotle rather than Plato? The Platonic inquiry into the ideal state, into the good, compels one to make a detour (cf. *Rep.* 435 and 504B) along which one must ask, *inter alia,* what the soul is, what its parts are,

what science is, what that-which-is is. Hence in Plato's intention, too, one must inquire into everything into which Aristotle, though no longer with a view to the one question about the good, inquires. And not only this. Plato teaches no less decisively than Aristotle that happiness and the specific perfection of man consists in pure contemplation and understanding. The essential difference between Plato and Aristotle is revealed only in the way in which they *conduct* themselves towards theory as the highest perfection of man. Aristotle sets it completely free; or rather, he leaves it in its natural freedom. Plato, on the other hand, *does not permit* the philosophers "what is now permitted them," namely the life of philosophizing as an abiding in the contemplation of the truth. He "*compels*" them to care for the others and to guard them, in order that the state may really be a state, a true state (*Rep.* 519–520C). The philosopher, who has *raised* himself above the sensible world in the contemplation of the beautiful, the just and the good as such, and who lives in that contemplation and *wants* to live in it, is called *back* to the state, *bound* back to the state, by the command of the founder of the state, a command which considers first the ordering of the whole and not the happiness of the part. Even the philosopher as such stands under the state, is answerable for himself before the state; he is not simply sovereign. What Plato *called for*—that philosophy stand under a higher court, under the state, under the *law*—is *fulfilled* in the age of belief in revelation. With all their freedom in the pursuit of knowledge, the philosophers of this era are conscious at every moment of their answerability for the law[80] and before the law: they justify their philosophizing before the bar of the law; they derive from the law their *authorization* to philosophize as a legal *duty* to philosophize.[81] The Platonism of these philosophers is given with their *situation,* with their standing in fact under the law. Since they stand in fact under the law, they admittedly no longer need, like Plato, to *seek* the law, the state, to *inquire* into it: the binding and absolutely perfect regimen of human life is *given* to them by a prophet. Hence

they are, as authorized by the law, free to philosophize in Aristotelian freedom: they can *therefore* aristotelize. Cohen expresses it thus: Maimonides "underestimated the danger residing in the depreciation of ethics in Aristotle. And from his standpoint he could overlook this danger all the more easily, since he saw the value of ethics kept safe in his religion" (87). Since the law is *given* for Maimonides and the Falasifa, it is not the leading and first theme of their philosophizing. It is for this reason that the metaphysical themes occupy so much more space in their writings than the moral-political. But as philosophers, of course, they must attempt to *understand* the given law; this understanding is made possible for them by Plato, and only by Plato.

Notes

Introduction

1. "Irrationalism" is just a variety of modern rationalism, which in itself is already "irrationalistic" enough.

2. Cf., e.g., Spinoza's justification of his antinomianism by recourse to the statement that man is in the hand of God as clay in the hand of the potter; cf. my work *Die Religionskritik Spinozas,* Berlin 1930, 191 ff. The assertion made in the text is intended in a more comprehensive sense than may at first appear. It extends also to the philosophic tradition, where it signifies the following: To the Enlightenment—insofar as it is more than a restoration of older positions—it is essential to make extremes of the tradition (or polemics against extremes of the tradition) into the foundation of a position that is completely incompatible with the tradition. The Enlightenment's aim was the rehabilitation of the natural through the denial (or limitation) of the supernatural, but what it accomplished was the discovery of a new "natural" foundation which, so far from being natural, is rather the residue, as it were, of the "supernatural." The extreme possibilities and claims discovered by the founders of the religious as well as the philosophical tradition by starting from the natural and the typical became, at the outset of modernity, self-evident and in this sense "natural"; hence they are no longer regarded as extremes requiring a radical demonstration, but themselves serve as a "natural" foundation for the negation or re-interpretation not only of the supernatural but also and precisely of the natural, the typical: in contrast to ancient and medieval philosophy, which

understand the extreme by starting from the typical, modern philosophy, in its origin and in all cases where it is not restoring older teachings, understands the typical from the extreme. Thus, by leaving out of account the "trivial" question about the essence and teachability of virtue, the extreme ("theological") virtue of charity becomes the "natural" ("philosophic") virtue; thus the critique of the natural ideal of courage, which the founder of the philosophic tradition had carried out in the context of his discovery of the extreme (and thus in this life unrealizable) ideal of knowledge (cf. esp. Plato, *Protag.* 349D and *Laws* 630C) and in such a way that the character of virtue in courage as such was still admitted, is now "radicalized" in such a way that the character of virtue in courage as such is denied outright; thus the extreme case of the "right of necessity" is made into the foundation of natural right; thus the polemic against the extreme possibility of miracles becomes the foundation of the "idealistic" turn of philosophy. The natural foundation which the Enlightenment aimed for but itself overthrew becomes accessible only if the battle of the Enlightenment against "prejudices,"—which has been pursued principally by empiricism and by modern history—is accordingly brought to a conclusion: only if the Enlightenment critique of the tradition is radicalized, as it was by Nietzsche, into a critique of the principles of the tradition (both the Greek and the Biblical), so that an original understanding of these principles again becomes possible. To that end and only to that end is the "historicizing" of philosophy justified and necessary: only the history of philosophy makes possible the ascent from the second, "unnatural" cave, into which we have fallen less because of the tradition itself than because of the tradition of polemics against the tradition, into that first, "natural" cave which Plato's image depicts, to emerge from which into the light is the original meaning of philosophizing.

3. Here we set aside completely the fact that not even Cohen and Rosenzweig acknowledged the original, non-"internalized" meaning of the basic tenets of the tradition.

4. Concerning Martin Buber's reservations cf. Rosenzweig's exchange with him, reprinted in "Zweistromland," pp. 48 ff.

5. The earliest writings of both Rosenzweig (*Hegel und der Staat*) and Ernst Simon (*Ranke und Hegel*) are devoted to the discussion with Hegel.

6. This observation also refers to by far the most important critique of the Enlightenment that has emerged from the return movement, viz. Cohen's critique of Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*. I refer provisionally to my essay "Cohens Analyse der Bibelwissenschaft Spinozas" (*Der Jude* VIII, 1924, pp. 295–314).

7. Lessing, *Gedanken über die Herrnhuter, in princ.*

8. On this and the following cf. Strauss, *Die Religionskritik Spinozas,* pp. 3 ff., 61, 85, 124 ff., 194 ff. and 200 ff.

9. After this liberty, acquired and legitimated in a questionable enough way, had become a self-evident possession, one could permit oneself to wish to understand the tradition better than it had understood itself, and thus to keep it at a safe distance by means of an ambiguous "reverence." The contemptuous indignation at the Enlightenment's mockery which is correlative to this "reverence" differs from the passionate indignation of orthodoxy in the same way in which the previously-described synthesis differs generally from orthodoxy: the mockery does far greater justice to orthodoxy than the later "reverence" does.

10. That one must distinguish between orthodoxy as such on the one hand, and the statements of many of its apologists and all of its "systematic philosophers" on the other hand, needs no further demonstration.

11. This is the basis of the fact that the Enlightenment could not prove and, insofar as it understood itself, could not even wish to prove the impossibility of miracles but only their unknowability.

12. On this latter point cf. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil,* Aph. 9.

13. The new probity is somewhat different from the old love of truth: when one speaks of "intellectual conscience," "one means the 'inner' sovereignty of science over man, and not just any science, but modern science" (G. Krüger, *Philosophie und Moral in der Kantischen Kritik,* Tubingen 1931, p. 9 n. 2). The impartiality that characterizes this probity is "the impartiality of not being partial to transcendent ideals" (K. Löwith, "Max Weber und Karl Marx," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik,* Vol. 67, pp. 72 ff.). This conception of probity recalls the definition of criticism: "La critique . . . a pour essence la négation du

surnaturel." To this it was objected: "L'essence de la critique, c'est l'attention" (A. Gratry, *Les sophistes et la critique,* Paris 1864, p. 9). It is in the sense of this objection that the opposition between probity and love of truth is to be understood: the open avowal that one is an atheist, and the resolute intention of accepting all the consequences, and in particular of rejecting the semitheism which was the dogmatic and probity-lacking premise of the post-Enlightenment synthesis, with all its implications, as for example the belief in progress—this has doubtless more probity than any compromises or syntheses; but if one makes atheism, which is admittedly not demonstrable, into a positive, dogmatic premise, then the probity expressed by it is something very different from the love of truth.

Chapter 1.

1. Julius Guttmann, *Die Philosophie des Judentums* (Munich 1933). In this essay, the numbers in parentheses refer to the page numbers of Guttmann's *Philosophie des Judentums.* Numbers preceded by an "R" refer to the pages of Guttmann's work *Religion und Wissenschaft im mittelalterlichen und im modernen Denken* (Berlin 1922).

2. The other crux of philosophy of culture is the fact of the political (cf. my "Anmerkungen zu Carl Schmitt, Der Begriff des Politischen," *Arch. für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik,* Vol. 67, pp. 732 ff.). If "religion" and "politics" are *the* facts that transcend "culture," or, to speak more precisely, the *original* facts, then the radical critique of the concept of "culture" is possible only in the form of a "theologico-political treatise,"—which of course, if it is not to lead back again to the foundation of "culture," must take exactly the opposite direction from the theologico-political treatises of the seventeenth century, especially those of Hobbes and Spinoza. The first condition for this would be, of course, that these seventeenth-century works no longer be understood, as they almost always have been up to now, within the horizon of philosophy of culture.

3. The most important exception, according to Guttmann's presentation, is the teaching of Saadia, which "holds fast throughout to the essential content of the Jewish premises of belief" (84). But—entirely apart from the fact that Saadia's doctrine of attributes, "followed to its final consequences," leads to

the neo-Platonic, and hence to an essentially un-Biblical concept of God (cf. 79 and 87)—Saadia's thought is "primitive and undeveloped" (77), and the proper argument between the Bible and philosophy does not occur until after the rise of Aristotelianism.

4. *Wider die Ächtung der Autorität,* pp. 41 f.

5. *Politische Ethik,* p. 103 (my italics).

6. Franz Rosenzweig, to whom I told this story, later published it in his notes to his translation of Judah Halevi.

7. In order to throw light on the stance of existential philosophy towards revelation, we again allude to Gogarten, who explicitly denies "that there is a [any] word which God speaks directly to man" (*Theologische Tradition und theologische Arbeit,* p. 12 n. 2). Cf. my work *Die Religionskritik Spinozas,* p. 165.

8. Guttmann takes these doubts into account in his more recent formulation, which is considerably more cautious, although unchanged in principle: "It is in the philosophic interpretation of religion that medieval philosophy shows its greatest originality. Otherwise dependent on the ancient tradition, and productive only in elaborating and continuing the received themes of thought, medieval thought developed here a new problem area. Even its basic reformulations of the concepts of ancient metaphysics spring from the need to accommodate the worldview of ancient metaphysics to the personalistic religion of the Bible" (pp. 63 f.).

9. *Guide* I 31.

10. The battle of the modern Enlightenment against "prejudices" is based on the radicalizing of this insight. On the historical character of the concept of "prejudice" cf. my work *Die Religionskritik Spinozas,* pp. 114 f., 163 ff. and 248.

11. *Milchamot ha-schem,* ed. Leipzig, 1866, p. 7. The previously-mentioned expression of Maimonides is of course not his last word on the significance of the revelation for philosophy; cf. *infra* pp. 64 ff.

12. *Vide infra* pp. 82 ff.

13. See the "Gegensatze" to the 1st Wolfenbuttler Fragment (Hempel XV 264 f.).

14. *Guide* I 71; II 16, 17, 22–25. Cf. Guttmann, p. 191.

15. *Guide* I 31–32, III 8–9. Cf. also the Letter to R. Chisdai (Kobez II 23a).

16. *Guide* I Intro. and II 38. Cf. Guttmann 178f. and 195. Guttmann asserts, on the strength of the relevant passage in the Introduction to *Guide* I, that there is only a difference of *degree* between the "momentary illumination" of the prophet and that of the philosopher. But—entirely apart from the fact that the passage in *Guide* II 38 certainly posits an *essential* difference between direct prophetic knowledge and merely indirect philosophic knowledge; and entirely apart from the fact that, even if Guttmann's interpretation were correct, a speculative superiority of the prophet over the philosopher would still be admitted, so that it could not be a matter of the *identity* of the revealed truths with the rational truths—apart from all this, Guttmann's interpretation ignores the *essential* distinction, drawn precisely in the passage which he adduces, between the "momentary illumination" of the prophet and that of the philosopher. For Maimonides says that the deep dark night is lit up for the prophet by lightning-flashes from on high, but for the philosopher only by the "small light" that shines (is *reflected*) from pure, gleaming bodies. In our interpretation we follow the Hebrew commentators (Narboni, Shemtob and Abravanel). Ibn Falqera in his commentary on *Guide* III 51 adduces a parallel from Alfarabi confirming that the source of the image in the Introduction to the *Guide* is the Platonic cave-image, and thus confirming our interpretation: only the prophets live outside the cave, only they see the sun itself; the philosophers see only the image of the sun, they have as it were only a visual memory of it. Cf. *infra* pp. 108 ff. and 126–127.

17. *Guide* II 25, II 32 and III 20.

18. Cf. *Guide* I 34. Since the end of revelation is the transmission of the teachings necessary for life, the revelation proclaims also such teachings as are not properly true but are nevertheless necessary to make human life, that is, community life, possible; cf. *Guide* III 28 and I 54, and my work *Die Religionskritik Spinozas* p. 155 (note 220).

19. Cf. *supra* pp. 138–139, n. 3.

20. *Emuna rama* towards the end; cf. Guttmann p. 173.

21. Cf. *infra* pp. 99–100.

22. On this and the following cf. *infra* pp. 118 ff. The still unpublished researches of Paul Kraus, which treat especially the history of Islamic religion and philosophy in the ninth and tenth centuries, offer important additional confirmations of the view outlined here.

23. Cf. also Guttmann's earliest publication, "Zür Kritik der Offenbarungsreligion in der islamischen und judischen Philosophie," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums,* Vol. 78, 1934, pp. 456–464.

24. We do not deny, as hardly needs to be mentioned, that the problem of "belief and knowledge" is the central problem of medieval rationalism. Our quarrel with Guttmann is only about the meaning of "belief" here, and it seems to us more precise to say "law and philosophy" rather than "belief and knowledge." For the "believed truths," which are, as Guttmann says, identical for the rationalists with the philosophic truths, are, *qua* "believed truths," part of a more comprehensive whole, viz. the law.

25. A confirmation of this is furnished by the way Averroism was received in the Christian world. One may with a certain right describe Christian Averroism as the forerunner of the modern conception of the state (cf. G. de Lagarde, *Recherches sur l'esprit politique de la Reforme,* Douai 1926, 52 ff. and 81 ff.), but the original Averroism's conception of the state is ancient throughout. I cannot fail to mention the remarkable juxtaposition of Plato and Muhammed in Nietzsche's *Will to Power,* Aph. 972.

26. Cf. Plato, *Laws, in princ.*

27. Cf. *Milchamot ha-schem,* ed. Leipzig 1866, p. 97.

28. Mendelssohn thereby proves to be a pupil of Hobbes. Regarding Mendelssohn's Hobbesism cf. Hamann's *Golgotha und Scheblimini.*

29. Cf. *infra* pp. 129 ff.

Chapter 2.

1. Cf. Mendelssohn's Preface to his commentary on Maimonides's *Millot Ha-higgayon* (*Gesammelte Schriften* II, 205).

2. Edited (*Philosophie und Theologie von Averroës,* München 1859) and translated (*Philosophie und Theologie von Averroës.*

Translated from the Arabic, München 1875) by M. J. Müller. Our citations follow the page and line numbers of Müller's edition; these page numbers are given also in Müller's translation.

3. Cf. Léon Gauthier, *La théorie d'Ibn Rochd (Averroès) sur les rapports de la religion et de la philosophie,* Paris 1909, 34 ff. Let me refer here once for all to the masterful quality of Gauthier's analysis of the *Facl-ul-maqal.*

4. This is also the view of Guttmann, "Elia del Medigos Verhältnis zu Averroës in seinem Bechinat ha-dat" (*Israel Abrahams Memorial Volume,* Vienna 1927, 194 f.).

5. This follows from e.g. 46, 12–15 and 49, 1–2.

6. Namely the question whether the creation of the world is to be understood as eternal or as temporal.

7. These passages are collected in Mehren, "Études sur la Philosophie d'Averrhoës . . ." (*Muséon* VII, 614–623 and VIII, 13) and in Gauthier, *l.c.* 126–130.

8. Cf. *infra,* pp. 91–92.

9. With the following cf. also *Yesodei Ha-tora* II ff.

10. *Guide* I 34 (120 f.); I 50; III 28 (214 f.); III 51 (435 ff.). (The numbers in parentheses refer to the pages of Munk's translation.)

11. *Guide* II 40; III 25–27; III 52 (435 ff.); III 54 (461 ff.).

12. *Guide* I 28 (96) and II 25. *Maamar techiyat ha-metim:* נצטרך לפרש הדבר שפשוטו נמנע ["We must interpret a speech whose literal meaning is impossible."] (Kobez, ed. Leipzig, II, 10b).

13. *Guide* I 35 (132 f.).

14. *Guide* I Intro. (9 f.); I 33; I 34; I 50 (182); III Intro. (3 f.); III 7 (44).

15. The agreement actually extends considerably further. It holds especially with regard to the philosophic foundation of the law. Here we shall mention only two particular agreements belonging to the legal foundation of philosophy. Maimonides (*Guide* I 35, 132 f.) teaches that one must say to him who cannot understand the interpretation of the text,

הדא אלנץ יפהם תאוילה אהל אלעלם ("the interpretation of this text is understood by the men of knowledge"); Averroes refers in the same connection to the Qur'an-verse:

وما يعلم تاويله الا الله واهل البرهان ("only God and the men of demonstration know its interpretation") (Müller, *l.c.* 16, 13). To be sure, Maimonides requires that one impart to the layman in question that the passages may in no case be understood literally (this concerns passages whose literal meaning attributes corporeality to God). Maimonides explains (*Guide* I 33, 116) that Scripture presents the metaphysical subjects

עלי מא יסדר אלדהן נחו וגודה לא עלי חקיקה מאהיתה ("[in such a manner that the mind is led] toward the existence of the objects of these opinions and representations but not toward grasping their essence as it truly is." Pines, p. 71); cf. Averroes *l.c.* 17, 7–9: the interpretation must refer only to quality, not to existence; for it is implicit in this assertion of Averroes that the law's teaching is obligatory only about existence, not about the What or the How.

16. *Guide* I 31 (104 f.); I 32 (114).

17. *Guide* II 24 (194); letter of Maimonides to R. Chisdai (Kobez II 23a):

מה למעלה מן קץ וכל זמנ שהנפן בגוף אינף ואני אומר שדעת האדם יש לה יכולה לידע . . . לדעת ולהסתקל. אבל כל מה שבטבע יכולה היא הטבע ("And I say that human knowledge has a limit, and so long as the soul is in the body it is not able to know what is above nature . . . but it is able to know and to contemplate everything that is in nature").

18. *V. supra,* pp. 64 ff.

19. Gauthier, "Scolastique musulmane et scolastique chrétienne" (*Revue d'Histoire de Philosophie* II 251 ff.) and Manser, *Das Verhältnis von Glauben und Wissen bei Averroës,* Paderborn 1911, 77.

20. *Guide* II 25 (197).

21. Cf. *Milhamot* 4, 2–5 with *Guide* I Intro (7 f. and 25) and I 50 (179). We cite the *Milchamot* (hereafter abbreviated *M*) by the page and line numbers of the Leipzig edition of 1866.

22. M 6, 32–7, 4 and 419, 8–15.

23. M 7, 9–11.

24. Cf. *supra,* pp. 91–92.

25. *Guide* II 24 (195).

26. M 4, 19.

27. M 4, 7.

28. M 4, 11–20.

29. M 4, 14–15.

30. The belief in the possibility of the progress of science is here of course not a belief in the possibility of an *infinite* progress; cf. M 356.

31. In this free posture over against the *philosophic* authorities, Gersonides does not differ at all from Maimonides (v. *Guide* II 22 [179] and II 24 [194], as well as II 19 [156]), or from Averroes (*Decisive Treatise* 4, 3–6 and 5, 10–12).

32. *Guide* I 71 (347).

33. *Guide* I 31 (105 f.).

34. M 5, 20 ff.

35. *Guide* I 32 (113).

36. *Guide* I Intro. (9–13).

37. M 8, 6–30.

38. M 5, 33–6, 2.

39. *Guide* I Intro. (10).

40. Para. 7a.

41. M 7, 12–17 and 419, 19–22.

42. M 441, 24 ff.

43. *Greater Commentary on the Topics,* München Cod. hebr. 26, Para. 326a.

44. M 85, 9–26.

45. M 95, 24–30; 190, 2–4.

46. *Guide* I 31 (105).

47. M 189, 1–14; cf. 5, 27–32.

48. M 189, 1–14.

49. Preface to the *Commentary on the Pentateuch.*

50. M 7, 12–17 and 419.

Chapter 3.

1. This essay, written in the summer of 1931, was intended in its original form, from which the present form does not differ in any important point, for publication in the *Korrespondenzblatt der Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Berlin, 1931), and had been accepted for publication by the editors of that journal, which however was no longer able to publish at that time. It appeared in its original form in the journal *Le Monde Oriental* (1933). The essay aims only to clarify the presuppositions of Maimonides's prophetology; it does not aim at a complete presentation of this doctrine elucidating all its obscurities. The most recent attempt at a complete presentation is that of Z. Diesendruck ("Maimonides's Lehre von der Prophetie," *Jewish Studies in Memory of Israel Abrahams,* New York 1927, pp. 74–134). This is not the place for a thorough discussion of his inquiry or of the rest of the literature.

2. The central position and the difficulties of his prophetology are fully and emphatically discussed by Diesendruck (*l.c.* 74–79).

3. The following observations about the "medieval Enlightenment" are oriented exclusively to the representative Islamic and Jewish *philosophers.*

4. Cf. *Guide* I 35 *in princ.* Cf. also Gersonides's polemic against esotericism, referred to above, pp. 95–96.

5. *Guide* II 40 and III 27–28.

6. *Guide* II 32 (261 f.).

7. Thus Maimonides can say that the Emanation (v. pp. 105–106) in dream differs from that in prophecy not in kind, but only in degree.

8. II 32 (261 f.) and 36 (287).

9. II 36 (284).

10. I 34 (end), II 47 (356), III 27 (210 f.).

11. II 36 (281).

12. II 38 (297 f.).

13. II 23 (182).

14. Cf. esp. I 73 (407 f.).

15. *Tract. theol.-pol.* II.

16. II 36 (288) and 45 (348).

17. II 22 (179).

18. II 24 (194) and III 8–9.

19. To be sure, the observation about the rank of the prophets other than Moses is found only in Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation (cf. Munk, *Guide* I 11 n. 2); but it is required by the whole context.

20. *Guide* I Intro. (10–12). In interpreting the passage we follow the Hebrew commentators; cf. e.g. Narboni: "The pure stone, that is, demonstration and especially speculation." Cf. also *Guide* II 38 (297 f.).

21. II 36 (284–287); cf. I 34 (125–127) and 50 (181).

22. *Guide* II 36 (281–283) and 37 (290 f.).

23. Maimonides says explicitly that the prophet's knowledge of the future (his ability to see the future before him as an embodied present) belongs to the imaginative faculty. This perfection of the imaginative faculty corresponds to that perfection of the intellect in accordance with which the prophet attains theoretical insights directly, without premises and conclusions. Now this further actualization of the imaginative faculty by the active intellect—and thus not only that actualization which enables it to present theoretical insights figuratively—must have as its necessary condition the influence of the active intellect on the intellect of the prophet: the active intellect acts only on the intellect, and only through the medium of the intellect does it act on the imaginative faculty (*Guide* II 38 [298]). This assertion stands in open conflict with the earlier assertion that the active intellect acts, in the case of veridical dreams, only on the imaginative faculty. The conflict is sharpened if one understands Maimonides's further assertion that veridical dreams and prophecy differ only in degree to mean that even in the prophet's knowledge of

the future, only the imaginative faculty is influenced by the active intellect. Cf. *infra* p. 147 n. 34.

24. *Guide* II 32 (261–263), 36 (281 and 287), 37 (290 f.).

25. Fr. Dieterici has edited (Leiden 1895) and translated (Leiden 1900) this text. Our citations will follow the page and line numbers of Dieterici's edition.

26. *Ideal State* 48, 3–5; cf. *Guide* II 36 (282).

27. *Ideal State* 47, 17–48, 9; 8–10; 50, 9–13.

28. *l.c.* 50, 21–51, 4; 51, 14–20.

29. *l.c.* 52, 7–23; 51, 10–12. The superiority of waking knowledge over that in dreams is decisive also for Maimonides's rank-ordering of the prophets; cf. *Guide* II 45 with II 41 (313 f.).

30. Maimonides too defines prophecy in this way; cf. *Guide* II 36 (281).

31. *Ideal State* 57, 17–58, 1; 58, 18–59, 1.

32. Cf. *l.c.* 59, 6 and 69, 19–70, 3 with 52, 15–16.

33. *l.c.* 59, 2–3. Cf. *Guide* II 36 (281).

34. In Maimonides's prophetology it remained particularly unclear whether and in what sense Maimonides claims that the active intellect directly influences the imaginative faculty (v. p. 147 n. 23). We now attempt to show what emerges from a consideration of Alfarabi's prophetology towards answering this question. Like Alfarabi, Maimonides teaches that in the case of prophetic knowledge, the active intellect influences first the intellect of the prophet and "*then*" his imaginative faculty (*Ideal State* 58, 22 and *Guide* II 35 [281]); like Alfarabi, he attributes the prophet's knowledge of the future to his imaginative faculty (59, 1 and II 38 [298]). In prophetic knowledge, then—regardless whether it is an imaginative grasp of the intelligibles or knowledge of the future—there occurs, according to both Alfarabi and Maimonides, no direct influence of the active intellect on the imaginative faculty. But how does it stand with non-prophetic knowledge? Maimonides immediately follows his unconditional denial of direct influence with a remarkable polemic: he denies that people who lack intellectual perfection can receive theoretical insights in sleep (II 38 [299 f.]). This possibility had been

recognized by Alfarabi; he teaches that in the veridical dream and in the lower rank of prophecy the active intellect even imparts intelligibles to the imaginative faculty. Perhaps Maimonides intends his denial of the direct influence of the active intellect on the imaginative faculty strictly with reference to prophecy as such—thus not with reference to the veridical dream—*and* in anticipation of his denying the possibility that a man whose intellect is not perfect could receive theoretical insights in dream; perhaps he does not deny any more than Alfarabi does that, in knowledge of the future through veridical dream, the active intellect acts directly on the imaginative faculty. In fact he even expressly asserts direct influence in the case of the (future-knowing) veridical dream (II 37 [291]). Speaking against the attempt to harmonize Maimonides's contradictory assertions in this way, by reference to his relationship to Alfarabi, is the following consideration, which also has reference to this relationship. It is striking that Maimonides says, in the passage where he speaks about the activity of the imaginative faculty in general, that it is at its strongest when the senses are at rest (II 36 [282]), while Alfarabi, whom he otherwise follows throughout (v. pp. 113 ff.), says in the same connection that it is when the senses *and the intellect* are at rest (47, 21 f. and 51, 15–17). Is this a case of Maimonides's looseness of expression, or a case of conscious correction? If the latter, he appears to be saying that even in knowledge of the future through the veridical dream, there is collaboration by the intellect. In this case his statement that in the veridical dream the active intellect influences only the imaginative faculty, and not the intellect, would have to be understood as follows: in the veridical dream too, the influence of the active intellect on the imaginative faculty takes place only by the way of the intellect; but if the intellect is not perfect, that influence passes over it almost without leaving a trace (cf. II 37 [291]).

35. *Guide* II 36 (281). *Ideal State* 52, 11–12 and 59, 2–3.

36. *Ideal State* 46, 7–47, 3.

37. *l.c.* 58, 23.

38. Perhaps Ibn Thufail's polemic against Alfarabi's prophetology (*Hayy ibn Yaqdhan,* ed. Gauthier, p. 12) also supports this interpretation; a passage in Alfarabi's *Philosophical Treatises* (ed. Dieterici, Leiden 1895, p. 75) would be a counter-example, if

this passage and its whole context actually comes from Alfarabi, and not, as seems to me more likely, from Avicenna. Cf. however the passage from Alfarabi cited below, pp. 126–127.

39. *De anima* V 6 (*Opera Avicennae,* Venet. 1508, f. 26b); *Tis' rasâ'il,* Constantinople 1298, 84; Landauer, "Die Psychologie des Ibn Sîna," *ZDMG* XXIX 410 f.

40. *Avicennae Metaphysices Compendium,* ex. ar. lat. redd. Carame, Roma 1927, 243 f.; cf. especially the translator's notes, p. 244. The Latin translation of the parallel passage in Avicenna's *Greater Metaphysics* (X, 1, ed. Venet. 1508, f. 107b) is simply unintelligible. I have consulted the original of the *Greater Metaphysics* in a Berlin ms. (Minutoli 229, f. 165b–166a). Cf. also the presentation of Avicenna's prophetology in Ghazzâli's *Tahafut* (ed. Bouyges, Beyrouth 1927, 272–275).

41. Avicenna says also in the *Risâla fi 'itbât an-nubûwâ* (*Tis' rasâ'il* 84) that the prophet occupies the highest rank among the earthly existences; cf. *Guide* II 36 (281).

42. *De anima* IV 4 (ed. Venet. 1508, f. 20b) and V 6 (f. 2Cb).

43. Diesendruck claims (*l.c.* 83 ff.) that the imaginative faculty is not constitutive for prophecy according to either Alfarabi or Avicenna. He arrives at this assertion with regard to Alfarabi merely because he does not take the *Ideal State* into consideration. With regard to Avicenna he relies exclusively on Schahrastâni.

44. Two characteristic teachings of Maimonides should be mentioned, although they do not affect the foundation laid by the Falasifa. Maimonides emphatically stresses that one of the conditions of prophecy is perfection of the intellect acquired through instruction and study (II 32 [263]; 36 [284 and 287]; 38 [300]; 42 [323]). With this teaching he enters into opposition against Avicenna, who understands the prophet's capacity for direct knowledge in the sense that the prophet does not depend upon instruction at all (*De anima* V 6; *Rasâ'il* 44 f.). We find this view even more sharply formulated in Averroes: ". . . it is known that the Prophet (viz. Muhammed) was an illiterate man among an illiterate, vulgar, nomadic people, which had never concerned itself with sciences and to which knowledge had never been attributed, which had never concerned itself with investigations about the

beings, as did the Greeks and other peoples among whom philosophy had been perfected over long ages" (*Philosophie und Theologie von Averroes,* trans. M. J. Müller, München 1875, 94). Compare with this the altogether different judgment of Maimonides about *his* people, *Guide* I 71 *in princ.* To corroborate his view, Averroes cites three Qur'an passages. This view is in fact the orthodox doctrine of Islam; cf. Alî ibn Rabban at-Tabarâ, *Kitâb ad-dîn wad-daula,* Cairo 1923, 48–50 and Alî ibn Muhammed al-mâwardî, *A'lâm an-nubuwwa,* Cairo 1315 (as per the obliging information of Mr. Abd-ul-alim). Maimonides's emphatic insistence on the prophets' need of instruction could be understood therefore as a polemic against Islam: he accepts the Islamic assertion of the fact that Muhammed had had no instruction at all, but he considers it already admitted in this assertion that Muhammed's claim to be a prophet is unjustified.—At first glance it appears to be of fundamental importance that Maimonides excludes the prophecy of Moses from his prophetology on principle. He explains that in the *Guide* he will say not a single word, not even by allusion, about the prophecy of Moses; that it differs fundamentally from the prophecy of the other prophets; that it is incomprehensible to man (II 35 [277 f. and 281]). He thereby gives the impression that, besides his explicit reservation against the prophetology of the Falasifa (II 32 [252 f.]), he wishes to make yet a further reservation. Is this really his intention? Despite his previously-mentioned statement, he gives us some information on how he understands the uniqueness of Moses's prophecy: Moses heard the word of God without the mediation of the imaginative faculty (II 45 [348]); he defines this uniqueness even more sharply by saying that Moses prophesied without images (II 36, [288]). This assertion cannot possibly hold without limitation; for Maimonides not only does not doubt, but emphasizes time and again, the figurative character of many expressions of the Torah. Almost every page of the *Guide* can serve as evidence of this. Here let it suffice to mention the fact that Maimonides, in the part of his prophetology where he discusses thematically the figurative character of prophetic speech, adduces passages promiscuously from both the Torah and the prophetic books; at the beginning of the relevant chapter (II 47) it is expressly stated that the instrument of prophecy, the imaginative faculty, leads to the figurative character of prophetic speech. Since Moses speaks in images no less than the other prophets, he must have the capacity

to express his insights in the form of images; that is, he must have a perfect imaginative faculty at his disposal and he must employ this faculty. One realizes how Maimonides's apparently contradictory assertion is to be understood if one follows a clue that Maimonides himself gives. In the passage where he says that Moses did not prophesy in images like the other prophets (II 36 [288]), he refers to his previous remarks on this subject. By these he probably means first of all his observations in *Yesodei ha-Torah* (VII 6). There the "non-imaginative" character of Moses's prophecy is defined as follows: he heard the word of God in the waking state, not in a dream or a vision; he saw the things themselves without enigma and image; he was not terrified and bewildered. What this means is that he was simply *not under the influence* of the imaginative faculty when he was in the condition of prophetic comprehension; he was not bewildered like the other prophets by direct contemplation of the upper world. It does not mean, and cannot mean, that he did not have the imaginative faculty *at his disposal* in the manner of the prophets, since he *must* have had it at his disposal when, under other circumstances, he wished to guide the multitude through speeches that would be intelligible to them.—That Maimonides does not deviate from the prophetology of the Falasifa with his doctrine of Moses's prophecy follows also from the observation of Narboni, in his commentary on Ibn Thufail's *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan,* that Maimonides adopted this teaching from Alfarabi and Ibn Bajja (cf. Steinschneider, *Alfarabi,* 65 n. 11). Cf. also the observation of Ephodi cited by Munk (II 288 n. 1).

45. *Guide* II 35 (279), 37 (291), 46 (354 f.); *Yesodei ha-Torah* VIII 1.

46. The following is based on the account of Ibn Khaldun (*Prolégomènes d'Ebn-Khaldoun,* ed. Quatremère, Paris, 1858, I 168–170).

47. *Guide* II 29 (224).

48. *Ideal State* 50, 18–51, 2.

49. *Guide* I Intro. (19).

50. *Guide* II 37 (290 f.).

51. 58, 23–59, 1.

52. For the understanding of this "and" reference should be made to Arist. *Pol.* III 6 (1278b, 19 ff.).

53. *Guide* III 54 (461 f.).

54. *Guide* II 40 and III 27.

55. That the end of prophecy is legislation and not knowledge of the future is asserted with particular emphasis—in a polemic against Gersonides—by Joseph Albo, *Iqqarim* III 12. The extensive agreement of this chapter with *Guide* II 39 is further evidence for the interpretation of Maimonides's prophetology developed above.

56. Practical philosophy, as Avicenna has explained just before this, consists of three parts: ethics, economics and politics.

57. The Arabic text was published in *Tis' rasâ'il,* Constantinople 1928, 73 f. For the establishment of the text I have used, besides that edition, a Gotha ms. (A 1158, fol 159). A Latin translation, apparently based on a somewhat fuller text, is located in the collection of Andreas Alpagus, Venet. 1546, 140b–141a; there is a Hebrew translation which considerably abridges the text in Falqera's *Reshit Chokma* (ed. David, Berlin 1902, 58 f.).

58. *Avicennae Opera,* Venet. 1508, Metaphys. X 2 and *Avicennae Metaphysices Compendium* (ed. Carame) 253–255. The Arabic text of the *Greater Metaphysics* was available to me in the Berlin ms. Minutoli 299 (fol. 168b–169a), and the Arabic text of the *Compendium* in the Rome edition, 1593. Cf. also Avicenna's *Ischarat wat-tanbihat* (*Le livre des théorèmes et des avertissements,* ed. J. Forget, Leyde[n] 1892, 200).

59. *Tis' rasâ'il* 2 f.

60. *l.c.* 85.

61. *Metaphys.* X 5 (Berlin ms. Minutoli 229 fol. 174b–175a).

62. *Tis' rasâ'il* 73 f.; v. *supra* p. 122.

63. Steinschneider, Hebrew translation 219.

64. *Metaphysics.* X 4 *in princ.* (Minutoli 229 fol. 171b).

65. The statements about the laws to be proclaimed by the prophet (*Metaph.* X 2–5) are of course governed in their particulars by Islamic law. Further investigation is needed of whether and to what extent Avicenna was influenced here by Plato even in details. For the time being, let me refer only to the following parallels. Avicenna: ". . . the first thing that must be determined

by law in the city is the matter of marriage, as that which leads to propagation; the legislator must summon to it and arouse the desire for it; for through it the species endure . . ." (*Metaph.* X 4). Plato: "What law must the legislator establish first? Will he not, in accordance with nature, first regulate by his orders the beginning of generation for the cities? . . . Is not the beginning of generation for all cities the marital union and partnership? . . . If the marriage laws are given first, this would be, as it seems, the proper thing with regard to the right ordering of the city" (*Laws* 720E–721A). Avicenna also refers to Plato as an authority for the statement that speech in enigmas and images is a condition of prophecy: "It is imposed on the prophet as a condition that his speech be intimation and his words hints, and as Plato says in the book of the *Laws,* he who does not understand the meaning of the prophet's intimations does not attain the kingdom of God. Thus in their writings the most renowned philosophers of the Greeks, and their prophets, employed images and figures in which they concealed their secrets, e. g., Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato" (*Tis' Rasâ'il* 85).

66. Steinschneider, *Alfarabi* 61. Cf. generally Steinschneider's chapter on Alfarabi's ethical and political writings (*l.c.* 60–73).

67. *Ideal State* 57, 13–59, 13.

68. *l.c.* 58, 23–59, 1.

69. *l.c.* 59, 10–60, 11.

70. From this it can be understood why Maimonides emphasizes bravery as a condition of prophecy in the *Guide* (II 38). The Talmudic statement that "prophecy rests only upon one who is wise, *strong* (*courageous*) and rich" does not come into question as a source for this assertion of Maimonides, as follows also from the fact that Maimonides takes that statement as his basis in an entirely different exposition of his prophetology; cf. *Guide* II 32 (263 and Munk's n. 2 there).

71. Plato, *Rep.* 485A–487A; cf. also *Rep.* 374E–376C and *Laws* 709E–710C.

72. *More ha-more,* Pressburg 1837, 132; the reference on p. 9 of this edition is marred by a misprint ("31" instead of "51").

73. Cf., e.g., Cicero, *De divinatione* I 41, 89. Karl Reinhardt has given a detailed interpretation of this doctrine and seeks to

trace it back to Poseidonius as its originator (*Poseidonius,* München 1921, esp. 429 ff.).

74. Cf. Tor Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds,* Stockholm 1918, 360.

75. Cf. the statements on Philo's doctrine of enthusiasm in Hans Lewy, *Sobria ebrietas. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der antiken Mystik,* Giessen 1929, 56 ff. The *pneuma* has the same function for Philo as the active intellect has for the Falasifa and Maimonides.

76. To bring forward the evidence for this claim is the most important task of his essay "Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis" (first appeared in the collection *Moses ben Maimon,* Leipzig 1908, I 63–134; reprinted in the *Judische Schriften.* Our citations below are by the page numbers of the first edition).

77. Cf. esp. 63 f., 70, 72 and 108.

78. Cohen italicized the sentence.

79. Similar expressions are to be found also on pp. 83 f. and 91.

80. "Hence, like Maimonides and Averroes especially, they are no less jurists" than philosophers.

81. Cf. *supra* p. 82.

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Philosophy and Law

Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors

Leo Strauss

Translated with an Introduction by Eve Adler

Leo Strauss's *Philosophy and Law* contains a groundbreaking study of the political philosophy of Maimonides and his Islamic predecessors, and it offers an argument on behalf of that philosophy which is also a profound critique of modern philosophy. Here is an entirely new and complete English translation of Strauss's work, which takes as its ideal the exacting standards of accuracy that Strauss himself emphasized in his own work. It includes a prefatory essay introducing the argument of each of the four sections of *Philosophy and Law.*

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LEO STRAUSS was the Robert Maynard Hutchins Distinguished Service Professor in Political Science at the University of Chicago. EVE ADLER is Professor of Classics at Middlebury College.

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